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Perceptions of Certified Central Office Administrators Who Choose Not to Apply for the Position of Superintendent

Felicia Moschella
felicia544@gmail.com

Perceptions of Certified Central Office Administrators Who Choose Not to Apply for the Position of Superintendent

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Felicia Moschella

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Felicia Moschella

Graduate School of Education

Lesley University

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Educational Leadership Specialization

Approvals

In the judgment of the following signatories, this dissertation meets the academic standards that have been established for the Doctor of Philosophy degree.

John H. Ciesluk, Ed.D. _____ _____
Doctoral Committee Chair Date

Eleanor Roffman, Ed.D. _____ _____
Doctoral Committee Member Date

Lisa Boes, Ed.D. _____ _____
Doctoral Committee Member Date

Stephen Gould, Ed.D. _____ _____
Director, Educational Leadership Specialization Date

Brenda Matthis, Ed.D. _____ _____
Director, Ph.D. Educational Studies Date

Amy Rutstein-Riley, Ph.D. _____ _____
Dean, Graduate School of Education Date

Abstract

This phenomenological study examined the reasons why certified, qualified central office administrators choose not to become school superintendents. The study investigated factors and conditions that may influence their decision-making. Twenty-two certified central office administrators employed in southeastern, Massachusetts responded to a forty-five-question survey, and four of those participants were also interviewed. This study led to eight findings. A majority of study participants: (1) held a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent; (2) possessed the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be a superintendent, but have chosen to not ascend to the position; (3) conveyed that becoming a superintendent of schools would have a negative impact on their quality of life; (4) imagined they would have a decreased level of job satisfaction if they were to become a superintendent; (5) deemed that it was not the right time in their career and/or personal life to make a career change from their current central office position to that of the superintendent; (6) reported that they do not believe the increased salary of a superintendent correlates to the increased job responsibilities; (7) indicated concern with the impact of school committee members' personal agendas; and (8) stated that they are familiar with the application and interview process for a superintendent position. Overall, these findings recognize that there does exist a pool of qualified and certified candidates for superintendent positions. The stresses the position places on the individual and their families, coupled with unrealistic expectations from communities and school committees, makes the job of superintendent less appealing to central office administrators. Future research could include interviewing early career superintendents, and aspiring superintendents.

Keywords: assistant superintendent, central office administrators, gender, job satisfaction, school committee, superintendent

DEDICATION

For the love of life and learning they instilled in me,

I dedicate this work to my Mom and Dad

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Personal Interest Statement

The school superintendent, the person responsible for the educational leadership of schools and school communities, is a position increasingly difficult to fill with qualified applicants. This problem was identified in the March 31, 2016 *Boston Globe*: "About one-fifth of Massachusetts's 275 superintendents leave or retire each year, and there is a shrinking pool of qualified applicants to replace them" (Rosenberg, NP).

My teaching career began in Tucson, Arizona where I taught for eight years before moving back to Massachusetts. After spending a year in graduate school at Boston College, receiving a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership, I began my administrative career in Massachusetts as a middle school assistant principal. During an eight-year period, I moved from being an assistant principal, principal, and finally named assistant superintendent for business and finance. From the early days of my career, I always envisioned myself being a principal and eventually a school superintendent.

I am an assistant superintendent of schools in a suburban school district south of Boston. The district's superintendent has been supportive of career advancement and has been a mentor to me, solving many district-wide problems together and working as a team in the best sense. I have the certification and experience to be an ideal candidate for a superintendent position; however, at this time I have no desire to assume that role. I have spoken with many colleagues who hold similar views as mine and have also chosen not to apply for superintendent positions. Based on my reluctance to apply to become a superintendent, coupled with many of my colleagues sharing the same disinclination, I believe it is important to investigate the perceptions of professionals in the field regarding this phenomenon.

Following this Personal Interest Statement, Chapter One introduces the following aspects of the study: (a) Statement of the Problem; (b) Purpose of the Study, including a description of the research questions; (c) Definition of Terms; (d) Significance; (e) Delimitation and Limitations; (f) Review of Literature; (g) Method; and (h) Chapter Outline.

Statement of the Problem

The job of the superintendent has evolved since the early days of the Common School, through the Industrial Revolution, Sputnik, and into the age of Education Reform and accountability. The evolution of the position has resulted in a new set of skills, job requirements and expectation to be successful.

Superintendents, as the leader of the school district, must provide the guidance, direction and appropriate allocation of fiscal resources to positively improve instruction for all students, including students from previously underserved populations (Sherman, 2008, p. 678). No longer can superintendents ignore achievement gaps among students; they must act to ensure all students are provided with the instructional resources to address the needs of all students (Sherman, 2008).

A major responsibility and task of the superintendent has become a continuous focus on student achievement, (Benderson, A., & Educational Testing Service, 1984; Hunt, 2008; Sherman, 2008). Hunt (2008) has argued that many schools have “decreased time in subjects other than language arts and math -- or had eliminated some of those subjects -- in order to make time for more instruction in the tested subject areas” (p. 584). While opponents of such reform efforts have suggested that tests and standards encourage lower performing teachers, they also suggest schools and districts get serious about improving teaching and learning; opponents believe that the “emphasis on tests leads to so much preparation that many important aspects of

education become a low priority, or ignored" (Jones, 2009, p. 4). Jones, citing Ralston in his 13th *Bracey Report,* suggested that "improving education will always improve scores in well-designed tests. But when the central aim is just to improve test scores, improved education is seldom the result" (p. 4).

The superintendent's role in leading a district in the age of accountability and test scores is to provide a vision and to allocate resources to positively impact teaching and learning (Houston, 2001, p. 429). Superintendents have been made to be "accountable" for the learning in their districts but have not been given the "authority" to make all the necessary changes. That conflict is presented in the following passage by Houston (2001):

> We ask superintendents what they are going to do about a particular matter, while we spread the power to do something across a system that includes boards, unions, and community groups. Of late, governors, legislators, and judges have also taken a bite from the authority apple… Accountability without authority is punishment. (p. 432)

Accountability for the success of the district has always been a hallmark of the superintendent position. In recent years, however, politics and school board relations have become the driving force behind the roles, responsibilities, and tasks of the modern superintendent (Grisson & Anderson, 2012).

The tenure of a superintendent in a community, and why he/she leaves, is an area that has garnered much attention and speculation in the media. If the tenure of one superintendent is short, or if a community has had a number of school leaders in short succession, the story is often the same: the new leader comes into the district with a great vision and plan, only to clash with the school board or an under-impressed community, moving on before the vision and plan can be carried out (Grisson & Anderson, 2012).

Grisson and Anderson (2012) have identified four categories of factors that lead to a superintendent's length of tenure in a community. They include (a) characteristics of the school district; (b) characteristics of the school board, including the relationship with the superintendent; (c) characteristics of the superintendent relevant to his or her employment opportunities or choices and (d) the superintendent's job performance, both actual and perceived (p. 1152).

A school district's characteristics play a major role in superintendent's length of tenure because they often define the working conditions upon which the superintendent must operate (Grisson & Anderson, 2012; Tekniepe, 2015). The community, along with special interest groups, can unduly influence the ability of the superintendent to lead a district. When the school board allows special interest groups, reflecting their agenda, to make uninformed demands regarding the district's policies or procedures, they risk the superintendent leaving the district (Tekniepe, 2015). Superintendents must be skilled in "responding to community and political pressures- with an aim toward mutually beneficial outcomes" (Tekniepe, 2015, p. 3). Conversely, a superintendent without these skills may face a premature departure, either voluntarily or involuntarily (Tekniepe, 2015).

The role of the school board (policy-making) and the superintendent (administration of the school district), while clear and ideal, have been the origin of much conflict between the two. Kowalski and Brunner (2011) have described this conflict:

> Ideally, school board members are expected to be public trustees who should make objective policy decisions in the best interest of the entire communities. Yet, in reality, many of them function as political delegates, making policy and administrative decisions on the basis of the narrower interests of their supporting political factions. (p. 159)

Elected school boards, as the employer of the superintendent, have the potential to provide both stability and instability in the tenure of the superintendent. With an absence of tenure laws for superintendents in most states, superintendents may be at the will of a school board in flux due to local political unrest (Alsbury, 2003). Frequent superintendent turnover may negatively affect the school district's ability to provide a vision, goals, and resources to improve instruction (Alsbury, 2003; Tekniepe, 2015). Tekniepe (2015) has suggested that superintendents must be granted strong employment contracts to counter a hastened termination with a change of school board membership; while contracts don't guarantee against premature departure, they may "provide stability against a vast array of occupational pressures and challenges that a superintendent may encounter" (p. 9).

Johnson (2001) stated that changes are needed to make the position one that qualified individuals would want to engage in:

> The public school superintendency is a highly political and conflict-ridden position. In order to make persons filling superintendencies more effective, more emphasis must be placed on attracting valuable top-level administrators and less on external pressures, which have taken precedence over the critical need for high-quality leadership. These issues have made it difficult to recruit and retain competent administrators, particularly in troubled school systems. It is important that issues such as stability, CEO and board relations, and the politics of the profession become part of the school reform agenda. (p. 18)

The literature on how the school superintendent position has evolved since the age of the common school shows an increasingly complex and multifaceted set of expectations placed upon one individual. Relevant literature also validates reasons for a dearth of qualified individuals

willing to move into the superintendent position. The political environment – both locally and nationally – the lack of funding for schools and districts, non-educator-based school boards, and high-stakes testing are but a few of the obstacles facing today's superintendent. These constraints are some of the factor's researchers have identified as causes for the superintendent shortage.

The problem this study addressed is that certified, qualified, experienced central office administrators are choosing not to apply for superintendent positions. As a result of this condition, the candidate pool for superintendents is both smaller and less experienced than it potentially would be if qualified central office administrators were applying for the positions, often resulting in newly appointed superintendents having a deficiency in professional experiences from which to draw upon.

Purpose of the Study

This purpose of this study was to understand why certified, qualified central office administrators are choosing to not become superintendents. This phenomenological study examined the factors and conditions that may bare influence on the decision making of certified, qualified central office administrators' choices to not become a superintendent. Such factors and conditions investigated include the responsibilities of the superintendent, the impact of the superintendency on one's work-life balance and job satisfaction, the influence of the school committee and the application, interview and evaluation process of the superintendent, and the compensation of the superintendent relative to the responsibilities.

The following three questions guided this study:

1. What do central office personnel consider to be the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent?
2. To what degree do central office personnel feel they have the knowledge, skills and

dispositions to be superintendent?

3. What are the factors and conditions that central office personnel report promote and inhibit them from applying for the position of superintendent?

Definition of Terms

Central Office Administrator: An administrator who possesses a Massachusetts DESE Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent license; whose employment is dependent on the license and has district wide responsibilities. For the purpose of this study, central office administrator refers to a person who resides in the central office and has district-wide responsibilities. For example, these responsibilities may include (a) director of special education, (b) director of curriculum and instruction, (c) director of English Language Learners, or (d) business administrator.

Qualified Superintendent Candidates: Any candidate who holds a Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent license.

Superintendent: An individual certified and employed to lead a school district.

Significance of the Study

The examination and analysis of the factors and conditions that impact and influence a certified, qualified central office administrator's decision to not become a superintendent can contribute to the field of educational leadership in several ways. Information and recommendations can be made to the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS), the Massachusetts Association of School Committee's (MASC), and college or university educational leadership programs regarding the reported barriers to attracting qualified professionals for superintendent positions. It can offer insights for MASS and MASC regarding

guidance, mentorship, professional development, and training for potential superintendent candidates.

This study can inform school committees facing shortages of certified and qualified candidates for open superintendent positions. Once identified, obstacles and barriers specific to the school committee, may be able to be addressed at the committee level. Additionally, school committees, along with local, state, and federal lawmakers, may glean suggestions for what they can do in their positions to create changes that would make the position of school superintendent more appealing to qualified, certified educational leaders.

Delimitations/Limitations of the Study

In this section I describe delimitations, or restrictions, that I imposed on the study to narrow its scope. I also articulate possible limitations that may exist.

Participants in the study consisted of current central office administrators in Southeastern Massachusetts who have not applied for a superintendent position. While all school districts have a superintendent, by title and responsibility, the titles and responsibilities of central office administrators vary greatly from district-to-district. Therefore, the titles of the participants are not a concern; what's important is that all participants were certified as a superintendent/assistant superintendent, and all had district-wide responsibilities.

Specifically, the participants included twenty-two central office administrators who were employed in Southeastern Massachusetts. In order to control for district size, all participants worked in districts with greater than 1500 students and fewer than 3500. The delimitation on district size eliminated administrators from large and small school districts, whose roles and responsibilities may differ greatly from those employed in medium suburban districts.

Based on the geographical area being studied, there is a high probability that I have personal knowledge of and professional relationships with many study participants. Due to my professional relationship with participants, the nature and title of the study, and the criteria for being a participant in the study, I predict some bias in the data collected. During analysis of the data, great care and effort was made to ensure my own bias did not interfere with the interpretation of the participants' experiences and perceptions; however, fully suspending, or bracketing, one's personal experiences in a phenomenological study is difficult to implement (Creswell, 2007).

Review of the Literature

The review of literature provided a theoretical and historical context for this study. The review of literature is comprised of three sections that provide the theoretical underpinnings for this study.

The first section, An Historical Perspective of the Changing Role of the Superintendent, provides an overview of the changing role of the school superintendent starting from the early days of the Old Deluder Satan Act of 1647, through the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

The second section examined the roles and responsibilities of the school superintendent in twenty-first century education. These responsibilities range from ensuring school safety to decreasing the achievement gap to managing the day-to-day operation of the district.

The last section included in the review of literature investigated the factors and conditions that both promote and discourage qualified individuals from choosing to become a superintendent, including the role of the school committee and unions.

Method

The Method section provides a detailed description of the administration of the study. It describes the design of the study, selection of the participants, the development of the instrument used, and the data collection process. Data analysis procedures are delineated issues of trustworthiness are put forth, and delimitations and limitations are presented.

This study was designed as a phenomenological, qualitative study that explored how and why certified, qualified central office administrators made the decision to not apply for superintendent positions. The study consisted of an online survey and voluntary, follow-up interviews with selected study participants. Forty-seven central office administrators in Southeastern Massachusetts were invited to participate in the on-line survey; twenty-eight participants began the survey, six reported they had applied for superintendent positions in the past two years; twenty-two completed the survey.

The questionnaire was distributed via email to central office administrators in Southeastern Massachusetts. Included in the email was an introductory message and a link to the Qualtrics electronic survey.

A questionnaire and interview protocol were developed by me. The instruments were designed to garner the participant's experiences, feelings, understandings and perceptions related to their decision not to apply for superintendent positions. A pilot study was conducted using the questionnaire and completed by administrations who did not meet the criteria to participate in the study. Feedback on clarity, directions and ease of completing the survey were provided; consequently, the survey was updated to address the feedback.

During the data analysis process, simple frequency distributions and measures of central tendency, mean and mode, were used. Additionally, using participants demographic information,

gender and age, the data was further evaluated for frequency distribution and central tendency, mean and mode.

To eliminate bias while conducting the study, it was important that I, as much as possible, suspended, or bracket my own experiences and bias. This was accomplished by developing a questionnaire void of my own biases towards why I have chosen to not become a superintendent. During follow-up interviews, a conscious attempt was made to remove any bias that could have influenced participant's responses to their own perspectives and lived experiences.

To ensure confidentiality and security of the data collected, all data were stored in a password protected computer.

Chapter Outline

Chapter One acts as the Introduction to the study. Included in chapter one is a Personal Interest Statement; Statement of the Problem; Purpose of the Study, including the Research Questions; Definition of Terms; Significance; Delimitation and Limitations; Review of Literature; Method; and Outline of Chapters.

Chapter Two encompasses a comprehensive literature review, which serves as a theoretical basis for the proposed study. The literature reviewed includes an historical perspective regarding the changing role of the school superintendent, and the current roles and responsibilities of the school superintendent. Lastly, the literature review includes the factors and conditions that both promote and discourage qualified individuals from choosing to become superintendents.

Chapter Three discusses the Method used in this study. It includes a detailed description of the design of the study and the rationale for the use of the phenomenological study. This chapter also includes a description of the participants, how the instruments were developed, and

the delimitations of the study. Additionally, in this chapter are the methods of data collection, data analysis, and the protocols used to ensure validity, reliability and trustworthiness.

Chapter Four describes the results of the data collected. The data are presented, described and analyzed. Eight findings that emerged through an analysis of the data proffered.

Chapter Five includes a study summary; discussion of the research findings, including practical and theoretical implications and recommendations. Suggestions for future research are delineated, and the chapter concludes with a personal reflection.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Public schools in the United States are now, and have historically been, led by a Superintendent of Schools. As the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent have evolved into what they are today, fewer qualified candidates are applying for open positions. Callahan (1966) has summarized the importance of having an effective superintendent lead the school organization:

> If a community has an able, well-qualified person in this key job and if it has the financial resources, it has a good chance of having excellent schools. On the other hand, if a school district has an incompetent, or just as bad, a mediocre superintendent, it is almost impossible, regardless of the financial situation, to have excellent schools. (p.1)

According to a 2000 report sponsored by the American Association of School Administrators, 71% of the superintendents who responded to the survey agreed that, "the superintendency is in a state of crisis in which fewer quality applicants are available for positions fraught with stress, inadequate resources and public demands for higher accountability" (Glass, 2001, p. 5).

This study investigates the factors and conditions impacting people's decisions to not become superintendents. Specifically, the perceptions of certified, qualified central office administrators who have chosen not to apply for superintendent positions. The review of literature is intended to provide the theoretical underpinnings for this study. The three sections of the review of literature are as follows: (1) a historical perspective of the changing role of the school superintendent, (2) current roles and responsibilities of the school superintendent, and (3)

the factors and conditions that both promote and discourage qualified individuals from choosing to become a superintendent.

A Historical Perspective on the Changing Role of the School Superintendent

In the following section, a history of the superintendent position in the United States is presented. From the earliest days of the Old Deluder Satan Act of 1647, to the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent of school have both changed and remained the same. Primarily, the school superintendent has been the leader of the organization, with specific roles, responsibilities, and expectations changing throughout the history of schooling in the United States.

The role of the superintendent of schools has long been viewed as the "preeminent position in American education" (Townley, 1992, p.1). According to David Tyack (1976), "to this day, historians have largely neglected those who probably did more than any other individuals to shape the day-to-day operation of American public education- the superintendents of school districts" (p. 257). While scholars have consistently identified the administrative duties of the school superintendent, a lack of information and understanding still exists about the educational leadership and decision-making at the local/district level (Tyack, 1976, p. 257). The position itself has always been viewed as an important; but beyond the management responsibilities, little is known as to what the superintendent actually "did" to influence the instruction in the classroom during the era prior to the common school movement (Tyack, 1976).

Larry Cuban (1976) has described the public view and importance of the school superintendency: "Few people question the importance of the superintendent to the future of a school system… superintendents make a difference in their children's lives" (p. 7). It is clear that the role of the school superintendent has historically been viewed as an integral part of our

educational system. This literature review examines (a) how and why the position of school superintendent has evolved into the position it is today; (b) why qualified individuals may choose, or conversely, not choose to become school superintendents; and (c) why scholars believe the tenure in these positions has decreased.

In Massachusetts, the responsibility of cities and towns to provide a formal education in reading and writing was established with the Old Deluder Satan Act of 1647. In Massachusetts, townships with greater than fifty households were required to "employ teachers to instruct the young so that they could learn to read Scriptures" (Laud, 1997, p. 2). The Act of 1647 went further to instruct, "…where any town shall increase to the number of one hundred Families or Householders, they shall set up a Grammar-School" (Mass.gov, Old Deluder Satan Act, 1647). The funding of schools, it was decreed, was the responsibility of the, "Parents or Masters of such children, or by the inhabitants in general" (Mass.gov, Old Deluder Satan Act, 1647). Even with the law in place, schooling was not attended by all; no mandatory attendance laws were in existence, and to many schools were viewed as an extension of the church. Additionally, the law's title provides a glimpse into its real purpose, "This law's title was derived from its purpose, as teaching youth to read allowing access to the *Christian Bible"* (Hazlett, 2011, p.1).

During the time between the establishment of the Old Deluder Satan Law (1647) and the beginning of the Common School Movement (1830s), in most communities, schools were an extension of the local church (Tyack, 1976). Unmarried, young women often taught the classes and her wage were paid for by the families of the students attending; thus, wealthier families who lived in and around the town/city center sent their children to school (Cuban, 1976, p. 9). With no common curriculum, textbook or framework in existence, churches often oversaw s the local schools (Callahan, 1966).

In the 1830s, Horace Mann advocated for free, public, locally controlled, "common" elementary schools. Local public schools became available to all children, regardless of religion, economic status or sex (Jeynes, 2007). With the advent of a free, public education available to all, schools and school districts began to overflow with students; more teachers were trained and hired (Cuban, 1976). Consequently, the first school superintendents were also appointed during that period in Buffalo, New York in 1837 and in 1839 in Providence, Rhode Island to manage the growing number of students, teachers, and schools (Callahan, 1966, p. 11).

With the introduction of The Common School Movement, schools were charged to "deliver a set of uniform subjects and courses- a strategy that required centralized control and standardization" (Kowalski, 2005, p.3). "Urban school systems established normative standards for public elementary and secondary education, and their superintendents were viewed as master teachers" (Callahan, 1962, p. 13). Outside of their teaching responsibilities, the responsibilities bestowed upon the superintendents by the school boards included assisting in the organization of the students by grade and ability, and to "promulgate to all the teachers the rules and regulations she may receive from the Board" (Cuban, 1976, p.10).

Elected and appointed school boards, mostly made up of laymen, were not qualified or equipped with the skills needed to run a school district; nor did they have the desire to oversee the centralization and standardization required as schools and districts became more densely populated and with greater diversity among the students (Cuban, 1976; Kowalski, 2005). With superintendents as scholars, school boards assumed the role of district managers (Kowalski, 2005, p. 4), but not without discourse. Elected or politically appointed trustees tried to "squeeze in school affairs while working full time elsewhere found it increasingly difficult to perform all their mandated duties" (Cuban, 1976, p. 10). In 1847, the New Orleans board attempted to

abolish the position of superintendent. It was believed that a board of directors could successfully satisfy the tasks required of the superintendent (Cuban, 1976). Prior to abolishing the position, it was determined that, in fact, the board of directors were ill-equipped to both manage the day operations and supervise the growing school population (Cuban, 1976).

With no centralized, federal governmental entity to oversee the growing school population in the United States, different cities and states took it upon themselves to investigate and determine the most effective leadership model (Callahan, 1966). In 1845, a survey was commissioned by members of the Boston School Committee to evaluate the state of the schools (Callahan, 1966). Although many recommendations were born from the survey, the most poignant related to the position of school superintendent. Schools would be under the direction of "one man, paid, under contract, before the eyes of the public, regularly reporting everything that he does under his own name and liable to lose his livelihood if he goes wrong" (Common School Journal, 1845, p. 310). Raymond Callahan (1966) summarized and hypothesized the implications of this development in the position of school superintendent, "the weakness of his position, his lack of job security is probably the greatest single weakness in the American school system and a weakness which has been responsible for all kinds of unfortunate consequences down through the years" (p. 22). This statement and sentiment continues to resonate throughout the history of the modern school superintendent position; including concerns around political pressures of the school board, requirements of governmental agencies and continued employment dependent on school board election results.

In the years before the 1890s, superintendents often moving to and from positions outside of education such as the ministry, law, or business (Tyack, 1976). The sundry backgrounds of the superintendent, coupled with differing school board expectations resulted in superintendents

fulfilling different roles in different communities (Cuban, 1976; Tyack, 1976). Tyack (1976) further explained the varied roles that superintendents saw for themselves in schools:

> Some were clerks in function as well as name. Some were really head teachers, people who inspired and guided the staff concentrated on classroom instruction. Others saw the job as comparable to that of a drill sergeant or inspector general who certified rigid compliance with rules and regulations. Here and there, superintendents compared their managerial duties with those of supervisors of factories. (p. 261)

With few policies or documents identifying a separation of duties or power between superintendents and school boards, school boards often took it upon themselves to significantly affect the daily operation of the schoolhouse (Callahan, 1966; Cuban, 1976). In many instances, the laymen of the school board took sole responsibility for tasks, exempt from the superintendent's input, such as hiring and firing teachers, and selecting textbooks. At times, the expertise of the superintendent was solicited, but many times it was not (Cuban, 1976). While within the legal power of the boards, these actions undermined the professionalism of the superintendent and oftentimes affected the function and effectiveness of the schoolhouse (Callahan, 1966).

Although superintendents did not invite the direct involvement of the school boards, and their meddling often caused disagreement, their involvement did fill a need in the political sphere (Cuban, 1976). Superintendents saw themselves as scholars, master teachers; often they wanted the authority to make decision, but they did not the responsibility or the community discord (Callahan, 1966; Cuban, 1976). Kowalski (2005) goes on to further decipher the often-seen strife between superintendents and school boards:

> Management functions were often assumed by school board members or relegated to subordinates because superintendents didn't want to be viewed publicly as either managers or politicians. They often hid behind a cloak of professionalism, especially when they encountered ambitious mayors and city council members who wanted to usurp their authority. (p. 4)

The roles and responsibilities of the superintendent changed little through the late 1800s early 1900s. In an 1890 report on the urban superintendent, Cuban (1976) described the responsibilities of the position as follows:

> It must be made his recognized duty to train teachers and inspire them with high ideals; to revise the course of study when new light shows that improvement is possible; to see that pupils and teachers are supplied with needed appliances for the best possible work; to devise rational methods of promoting pupils. (p.16)

In the late 1800s, as small school districts merged and large city school districts grew, school boards became concerned that superintendents lacked the skills necessary to successfully run large school districts (Kowalski, 2005). As many superintendents were promoted from teaching positions and principal positions, school boards were concerned that the superintendents would lack management skills and knowledge (Kowalski, 2005). In addition, with the impact of the Industrial Revolution, where emphasis was placed on productivity and output, politicians and local school boards members were "focused more directly and intensely on resource management" and wanted leaders who could "improve operations by concentrating on time and efficiency" (Kowalski, 2005, p.5).

Cuban (1976) described the conflict between instructional leaders and business managers:

> The lines of argument crystallized over whether the functions of a big-city superintendent should be separated into two distinct jobs, i.e. business managers and superintendents of instruction… or that the superintendent simply surrender to the inevitable impact of largeness upon school systems and become efficient managers. (p. 17)

Superintendents began to describe themselves and their colleagues as either "men of the office or of the school room" (Cuban, 1976, p. 17); meaning, either you were a businessman or a scholar, but couldn't be both. Horace Torbell, Superintendent of Schools in Providence, RI identified the discourse between the roles of the superintendent as, "he may become a business man, a manager of affairs, rather than continue to maintain the attitude of a scholar… worse yet, he may become a politician" (Cuban, 1976, p.15). Much political discussion ensued across the country as school boards, mayors and other elected officials disagreed on the power and roles superintendents should have (Cuban, 1976).

As early as 1890, the role of scholar versus business leader in the superintendent position was being debated and questioned. Callahan (1966) quotes Burke Hinsdale, prominent superintendent and then college professor, regarding what he saw as the primary, most important role of the school superintendent:

> The superintendent has combined many vocations and performed many duties. This is the case at the present time also. Some superintendents attend more to the educational side, and some more to the business or administrative side of the work, and no doubt this will be true to some extent in the time to come, and there is no reason why it should not be so… Should the superintendent be more a leader of his teachers and of the community in respect to educational matters, or should he be more of a businessman or administrator?

> ... Those who are familiar with my ways of thinking on these subjects will not expect me to hesitate in deciding for the first of these courses. (p. 193)

In 1892, Cleveland Superintendent Andrew Draper, along with a small committee, authored *The Cleveland Plan,* which described and modeled a "strong superintendent" who had complete executive authority (Cuban, 1976, p. 16). The main tenet of the plan was that "bodies legislate and individuals execute" (Cuban, 1976, p. 17). While the concept proved to be worthwhile in practice, to this day, the lines between school board and superintendent are often unclear; often resulting is discourse and difficulty for the superintendent to lead the learning (Grissom & Anderson, 2012; Kowalski & Brunner, 2011).

Some important questions have emerged from the earliest days of the school superintendent until today. First, are superintendent's scholar-leaders, or business-leaders? Consequently, how should the leader's time be spent? Additionally, what should the division of power and responsibilities be between the superintendent and the school board?

The career ladder for most superintendents was short and typically only had three rungs, of which the superintendent climbed quickly: teacher-principal-superintendent (Tyack, 1976). Once one became a superintendent, most (71 percent) taught classes, performed cleaning and maintenance on the schoolhouse, and acted as a liaison to the community, which was often a "vital and time-consuming part of the job… they interacted frequently with parents, ministers, medical workers, salesmen, lay board members, and leaders from local associations" (Tyack, 1976, p. 272). Superintendents "won reputations as Administrative Leaders, a Plant Man, a Good Personnel Type, Solid Business Administrator, or Dependable Budget Man" (Cuban, 1976, p. 21). The superintendent was expected to balance the day-to-day operations and management of the school with that of the social/political responsibilities (Cuban, 1976; Tyack, 1976).

Since school boards were the ultimate employer of the superintendent, the lack of clear boundaries between the two has impacted where one's responsibility ended and the other began. Cuban (1976) described that role difficulty in the following passage:

> Since boards determined employment, since boards and schoolmen could seldom clarify the blurred lines of authority between them, and since schools operated in a fluid environment that often placed conflicting demands upon both sets of actors, the conception of Negotiator-Statesman, Chief Administrator, and Teacher-Scholar emerged inevitably as superintendents sought to survive annual reelection and, ultimately, to separate themselves from lay interference. (p.22)

In addition to the aforementioned roles the superintendent was required to hold, superintendents and the communities they served viewed his (as superintendents were almost always male) responsibility to play a fatherly role to the teachers, which were most often female, and to also be the "guardians of decorum and morality" (Tyack, 1976, p. 273). "It was common for them to meet the teachers at the railroad station, find them a place to board in town, and advise them on 'social and moral conduct', including 'appropriate and sanitary dress'" (Tyack, 1976, p. 273).

From 1910 to the early 1930s, the superintendent was most often viewed as the business manager or school executive (Callahan, 1966, p. 187). Schools are not business and "the 'output' of education was far more difficult to measure than profit and loss in General Motors; the goals of schooling were ambiguous" (Tyack, 1976, p. 275). The stock market crash of 1929 subjected this model of school district leadership to intense criticism. Before 1929, if a superintendent could effectively and efficiently manage schools in similar fashion to that of successful factories, they were viewed by the board and the community as successful (Kowalski, 2005). Following

the stock market crash and depression, the allure that industry heads had acquired was lost (Kowalski, 2005). During the Great Depression, in many large cities, the superintendent's responsibilities shifted to that of a "consummate politician" (Kowalski, 2005). Competing for the limited financial resource available became the responsibility of the superintendent of schools (Kowalski, 2005). To be successful, the superintendent was required to "complete with other governmental services to acquire state funding," a behavior thought of as unprofessional before this time (Kowalski, 2005, p.8).

With the Great Depression, the business model of schools lost it fervor (Kowalski & Brunner, 2011, p.147). Although the concept of superintendent as "business executive diminished, the realization that management functions were essential became embedded in the culture of the education profession." Furthermore, the premise was accepted that "effective administrators had to be both managers and leaders; the goal was not to eradicate management but rather to put it in its proper place" (Kowalski & Brunner, 2011, p. 147).

Throughout the first half of the 1900s, little changed in districts as it related to school superintendents; they were viewed as the managers, stewards of the school district (Kowalski & Brunner, 2011). Grogan and Andrews (2002) described the superintendent as one who was an "expert manager" whose "main responsibility was to ensure the efficient running of schools" (p. 234). Schools and school systems, however, faced monumental reform efforts during the second half of the 20th century (Jones, 2009).

With the end of World War II and the beginning of the Cold War in sight, the federal government understood the need for scientific research would continue (Johanningmeier, 2010). "The nations engagement in the Cold War required scientists, mathematicians, and engineers to

develop and to maintain technology the nation required for its defense" (Johanningmeier, 2010, p. 349).

Following Russia's launch of Sputnik in 1957, education in the United States came under great scrutiny. "It's beeping signal from space galvanized the United States to enact reforms in science and engineering education so that the nation could regain technological ground it appeared to have lost to its Soviet rival" (Powell, 2007). With Sputnik came fears that the Soviet Union had surpassed the United States in scientific, technological, and engineering prowess. "American mediocrity, which many blamed on the failures of public schools, was seen as a result of apathy, unaccountability, government shortsightedness, and the failures of progressive education reform" (Steeves, Bernhardt, Burns and Lombard, 2009, p. 75). The major success of the industrial revolution, efficiency, was a seen as a result of "equivalence of parts and process" (Steeves, et al., 2009, p.78). This success model in industry was then translated into a model in education:

> making a curriculum that was clear enough and standard in such a way that anyone could teach it to any group of students. Along with a common school day, common graduation requirements, common grades, the sameness was also expected of teachers who were prepared in an increasingly standard way to teach in a standardized system in order to guarantee results. (Steeves, et al., p. 78)

The federal government became the major funding source for public education reform efforts, mainly through its fiscal support of the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the establishment of the landmark National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958 (Jolly, 2009). It was also during this time that the federal government became interested in public education,

specifically how public schools were preparing the next generation of scientists and engineers (Johanningmeier, 2010, p. 350).

Both the funding of the National Science Foundation and the establishment of the congressional National Defense of Education Act (NDEA) significantly increased K-12 curriculum development, supported innovative instructional changes, the identification of gifted and talented students (especially in science and mathematics) and increased funds available to local schools (Dow, 1997; Johanningmeier, 2010; Jolly, 2009). More importantly, the NDEA represented "deliberate action by the federal government to dramatically increase its arc of influence" on public schools. (Steeves, et al., 2009, p. 75).

With Sputnik as the catalyst, educational reform efforts were in full force in the 1960s. Much to the consternation of educators who had previously been the driving force of curriculum design, reform efforts were now being led by scientists (Powell, 2007). Peter Dow (1997) further describes features of these reform efforts, "Nobel laureates sought ways to teach the very young how scientists and mathematicians think, and men who had worked on the Manhattan Project created 'kitchen physics' courses for the elementary schools…Scholars may have shaped the conceptual design of the new programs, but gifted teachers translated the new ideas into effective classroom materials and instruction" (p. 2).

Following the Great Depression, World War II and the launch of Sputnik, the role of the school superintendent shifted. Getzels stated, "prior to the 1950s, the practice of school administration focused largely on internal operations, but gradually, systems theory was employed to demonstrate how external legal, political, social and economic systems affected the operation of productivity of schools" (as cited in Kowalski & Brunner 2011, p. 148). Kowalski and Brunner (2011) go on to theorize that the superintendent as both an instructional leader and

social scientist provided a clear separation between the administrators and teachers, with an appreciation that administrators had a more challenging and technical position and possess knowledge beyond teaching (p. 148).

The role, or rather the country's view, of the responsibilities of the school superintendent before the release of the 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*, was best articulated by John W. Hunt (2008):

> Administrators were expected to recognize good teaching talent and then turn those teachers loose into the classroom to instruct the nation's youth… Both building-level administrators and district administrators were overwhelmingly male and were expected to be transmitters of the educational culture of the school district. If the school was orderly and the parents were happy, everything was copacetic. (p. 581)

Throughout the history of the school superintendent, if a man was an effective manager, successful with school boards and administered the funding appropriately, they were most often viewed as successful. The release of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 and later No Child Left Behind (NCLB) most significantly changed the role, responsibilities, and skills needed to be a successful, modern day superintendent of schools.

In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education (the Commission), an eighteen-member panel of educators and elected officials, commissioned by the then secretary of education, Terrel H. Bell released the report titled, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* and "carried the self-confident subtitle 'The Imperative for Education Reform'" (Holton, 1984, p. 1). The commission had great confidence in their interpretation and reporting of the issues and problems plaguing education in the United States. The commission warned of "a rising tide of mediocrity" in education and that with the possibility of students in

the United States falling behind students across the world, consequently putting national security and the countries future in peril (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). And "if an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might as well have viewed it as an act of war" (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).

The release of *A Nation at Risk* was "groundbreaking in emphasizing the importance of education to economic competitiveness and the failings of American schooling in comparison with international competitors… and argued that schools, not society should be held accountable for higher performance" (Mehta, 2015, p. 20). The report garnered an unprecedented amount of attention across the United States. Additionally, the opinions generated in the report framed the deliberations and struggles over the direction of education in this country (Holton, 1984). Gerald Holton (1984) also believes that "some of the initial attention given to the report by the media stems from the perceived dissonance between the recommendations and the interpretations of them" (p. 18). Other critics believe the commission "manufactured a crisis" in education to forward a specific political agenda and the crisis was deemed "so far-reaching in its impact that it still governs the way we think about public education 30 years later" (Mehta, 2015, p. 21).

The role of school leaders in a post *A Nation at Risk* has shifted significantly from previously identified responsibilities of management and culture building (Hunt, 2008). *A Nation at Risk* (1983) provides an impetus for the changes required of the next generation of school leader:

> The Commission stresses the distinction between leadership skills involving persuasion, setting goals and developing community consensus behind them, and managerial and supervisory skills. Although the latter are necessary, we believe that schools boards must

> consciously develop leadership skills at the school and district levels if reforms we propose are to be achieved. (p. 32)

Hunt (2008), quoting Timothy Knowles, identified that school leaders focus is on the improvement of teaching and (p. 581). Consequently, "in the early and mid-1980s, few administrators realized that they would spend the next 25 years serving as apologists for their profession" (Hunt, 2008, p. 581). School districts, school leaders, and teachers were under attack; it was believed that "there was a need for better curriculum, there were low expectations of students, classroom time was poorly managed, and there was a need to attract better teachers" (Jones, 2009, p.2).

Three distinct movements have emerged in school and district leadership since the release of *A Nation at Risk*: The Excellence Movement, The Restructuring Movement, and the Standards Movement. Each of these movements has had an impact on the responsibilities of school principals and superintendents. Like many reform efforts, new teaching and learning philosophies were introduced before earlier ones were able to be solidified in the schoolhouse (Hunt, 2008).

Hunt (2008) described the intent of the Excellence Movement to "increase standards for students, as well as for classroom teachers, by tinkering with the conditions of teaching" (p. 581). Such initiatives as increased graduation requirements, longer school days, additional requirements for teacher certification, and additional standardized student assessments were commonplace and viewed as top-down, directed by state legislators, with little input from teachers and district-level administrators (Hunt, 2008). Structural changes of the educational system were suggested, little to no focus on actual instructional changes. "In other words, the

target was the educational system in general, rather than what was happening inside the individual classroom" (Hunt, 2008, p. 582).

During the years of the Excellence Movement, school leaders were encouraged to revisit a business model approach to schools and school systems (Hunt, 2008; Nash & Ducharme, 1983). Business interests had great influence on state policy makers. "On the one hand, administrators were now being urged to become leaders; on the other hand, the business/management model approach was held up as a model" (Hunt, 2008, p. 582). Nash and Ducharme (1983) go on to further describe the role that the Commission believed district leaders should fulfill: "The Commission encourages educational leaders to act as corporate board chairmen. Using 'leadership' and 'managerial' skills… in order to fund the initiatives of the Report" (p. 45). Unfortunately, the Commission assumed that because the initiatives were important, the public would embrace the recommendations and more importantly, fund them (Nash & Ducharme, 1983). Nonetheless, like many worthwhile educational endeavors, neither the Federal Government, nor local governmental entities, raised taxes or siphoned money from other agencies to fund the proposed changes (Nash & Ducharme, 1983).

The Restructuring Movement of the late 1980s focused on *site-based management*, forsaking control from school boards and superintendents and yielding it back to the individual school (Hunt, 2008). Superintendents and principals were encouraged to support educators who wanted to try new approaches to classroom instruction; additionally, "administrators had to be comfortable giving up the sense of control and expertise that many had previously felt" (Hunt, 2008, p. 582). With site-based management, came leadership difficulties for superintendents. While many shared the attitude that they wanted to "create a district where a good idea is as

likely to come from a kindergarten teacher as from the superintendent," the ultimate responsibility for the success of the district continued to fall on the superintendent (Hunt, 2008).

While the Restructuring Movement provided increased flexibility for individual principals and superintendents to make local decisions, it was accompanied by increased accountability from the state and federal government (Hunt, 2008; Mehta, 2015). Jal Mehta (2015) described the battle lines between teachers and a "mantra of accountability":

> Many teachers argue that it is unfair for them to be judged on outcomes that are at least partly out of their control, and with political reformers preaching the mantra of accountability and 'no excuses.' Again, the lines are teachers versus politicians and parents… The result has been a downward spiral of distrust between policymakers and practitioners. (p. 26)

The distrust between teachers, school leaders, and policymakers regarding school accountability gave rise to broader conversations around such issues as poverty, homelessness and school segregation and their impact on student achievement (Mehta, 2015). Superintendents during this time had to focus on providing school leaders with the skills and knowledge to assist teachers in improving their own classroom instruction, regardless of the student population in front of them (Hunt, 2008).

The third movement is the Standards Movement, "with roots in *A Nation at Risk*… Elements of this movement gained renewed vigor with the coming of NCLB" (Hunt, 2008, p. 583). The Standards Movement, through the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), called for strict academic standards about what students should know and be able to do across several grades and in several disciplines (Cross & Joftus, 1997; Hunt, 2008; Jones, 2009). "One of the reasons we have NCLB with us today is that we paid too little attention to the

various subgroups of students in the past" (Hunt, 2008, p. 584). NCLB is "considered revolutionary because of its unparalleled attention to achievement gaps" in education (Sherman, 2008, p. 675). School and district leaders were expected to focus their efforts on the achievement of all students, irrespective of their background or previous successes or failures.

School superintendents, with the strict accountability standards put forth in No Child Left Behind, have a greater responsibility in the leading of their district to ensure all students succeed.

Current Roles and Responsibilities of the School Superintendent

As described in the previous section, as schools have developed over time, so to have the roles and responsibilities of the school superintendent. Throughout the history of the school superintendent, one could point to the position and easily discern that the superintendent is "in charge," but what the superintendent actually does, day-in and day-out has not been clearly understood (Lashway, 2002). In the following section, the roles and responsibilities of a superintendent in twenty-first century education are explored.

With an increase in accountability concerning the achievement of all students, superintendents and principals have had to struggle with newfound issues of student performance across their districts and schools (Cross & Joftus, 1997; Hunt, 2008; Mahta, 2015). While many reformers have hailed No Child Left Behind (NCLB) a success in terms of improving student achievement, much of the school improvement efforts have been focused on the areas tested, limiting efforts across the broader school community. Before NCLB, administrators viewed their respective school or districts achievement in terms aggregate data with scores in the average range being deemed good enough (Hunt, 2008). Grogan and Sherman (2003), however, described the evolution of importance of data in the age of NCLB as a means to ensure all

students reach their highest potential, as well as to determine possible discrepancies that may exist between various groups of students.

It has become the responsibility of the superintendent to "perceive gaps in achievement among diverse populations of students as problematic and unjust" (Sherman, 2008, p. 678). Superintendents, as the leader of school districts, must provide the leadership and fiscal resources to provide instruction to address the needs of all students, including those underserved in the past (Sherman, 2008). No longer could superintendents or teachers ignore achievement gaps among students; instead they had to ensure that instructional resources were provided to address the needs of all students (Sherman, 2008).

A major responsibility and task of the superintendent has become how both staff and students spend their time during both the school day and during professional development with a continuous focus on student achievement (Benderson, A., & Educational Testing Service, 1984; Hunt, 2008; Sherman, 2008). Hunt (2008) has argued further that many schools have made decisions to increase instruction in subjects such as language arts and math, tested areas, consequently decreasing time in other areas historically taught in schools. While opponents of reform efforts have suggested that tests and standards encourage lower performing teachers to perform at a higher level, they also suggest schools and districts get serious about improving teaching and learning across all area of the school, not just those with high stakes tests (Jones, 2009). Jones, citing Ralston in his 13th *Bracey Report*, suggested that "improving education will always improve scores in well-designed tests. But when the central aim is just to improve test scores, improved education is seldom the result" (p. 4). Houston (2001) further explains that, "fear has never been a particularly effective motivation… That means that reforms built on the foundation of fear are doomed" (p. 432).

For superintendents, the ability to navigate the high stakes nature of NCLB to truly improve teaching and learning has led to a difficult task (Hunt, 2008). In one example, a superintendent redistricts selected students solely to ensure that the school does not have enough students to qualify for a subgroup, triggering an NCLB reportable subgroup (Hunt, 2008). Leaders may choose to allocate additional fiscal resources to tested areas, and not equitably among school subjects and programs (Hunt, 2008). Additionally, due to NCLB achievement benchmarks, leaders may labor in decisions regarding whether or not to use fiscal resources and teachers to provide additional instructional support for students without a real chance of making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) (Hunt, 2008).

The superintendent's role in leading a district in the age of accountability and test scores, is to "alter the behavior of the organization, and expand the possibilities of the whole community" (Houston, 2001, p. 429). Houston (2001), however, goes on to describe the superintendent's position as "impossible and the expectations are unrealistic" (p. 432). Superintendents have been made to be accountable for the learning in their districts, but they have not always been given the authority to make all the necessary changes (Houston, 2001) Site-based managers, elected officials, school boards, and teacher unions have been bestowed with power and decision-making authority; yet the superintendent is responsible for all decisions made within his or her jurisdiction (Houston, 2001). Accountability for the success of the district has always been a hallmark of the superintendent position; and, with diminishing authority, the ability to be successful is increasingly difficult; accountability without authority is punishment (Houston, 2001).

Waters and Marzano (2006) studied the influence of district superintendents on student achievement. The most significant aspects of their study identified five responsibilities of

superintendent's leadership that positively impacted student academic achievement. These responsibilities include (1) collaborative goal setting, (2) nonnegotiable goals for achievement and instruction, (3) board alignment and support of district goals, (4) monitor achievement and instruction goals, and (5) use of resources to support achievement and instruction (Waters & Marzano, 2006). A description of these responsibilities is included in the following section.

Waters and Marzano (2006) identify collaborative goal setting as a means by which the superintendent facilitates a process in which all district stakeholders are involved in the establishment of goals for the district. It is important the superintendent ensures the collective goals are understandable by all, and that they demonstrate the value of improved instruction and achievement, rather than reflecting that the status quo is adequate (Waters & Marzano, 2006).

Within the collaborative goals developed by stakeholders, nonnegotiable goals for achievement and instruction must be included; "this means the district sets specific achievement targets for the district as a whole, for individual schools, and for subpopulations of students within the district" (Waters & Marzano, 2006, p. 12). The superintendent must ensure the that research-based strategies are used throughout all classrooms to reach those targeted goals of increased achievement for all students (Waters & Marzano, 2006).

Waters and Marzano (2006) identified "board alignment with, and support of, district goals" (p. 12) as a vital piece of the goal setting process. The board, in conjunction with the superintendent, must ensure that the agreed upon goals remain the top priority in the district, "when individual board members interest and expectations distract from board-adopted achievement and instructional goals, they are not contributing to district success, but, in fact, may be working in opposition to that end" (Waters & Marzano, 2006, p.12). It is necessary that

the superintendent, along with the school board, safeguard the district's efforts to accomplish the collective goals (Waters & Marzano, 2006).

Waters and Marzano (2006) asserted that the superintendent, as the instructional leader of the district, bears the responsibility to monitor progress toward the achievement of instructional goals. Effective superintendents establish a means by which individual schools examine the extent to which they are meeting their goals. Should it be determined that goals not being met, the superintendent must ensure corrective action is undertaken (Waters & Marzano, 2006).

Waters and Marzano (2006) also suggested that the superintendent is responsible to ensure that "necessary resources, including time, money, personnel, and materials" are both received and appropriately allocated to achieve the goals established for achievement and instruction (p.4). Notably, the allocation of time and money must include funding dedicated to professional development for teachers and administrators alike, with a focus on building the knowledge and skills needed to fulfill the district's goals (Waters & Marzano, 2006).

In the prior section, the responsibilities of the superintendent with regard to student achievement as identified by Waters and Marzano (2006), were discussed. How the superintendents' responsibilities intersect with the responsibilities of the school committee are explored in the following section.

Sharp and Walter (2009) characterized the relationship between the superintendent and the school board as, "crucial, not only for the job security of the superintendent, but also for the efficient management of the school district" (p. 89). A positive relationship between the superintendent and school board is vital to the success of the superintendent (Sharp, Malone & Walters, 2002). Despite "theoretical clarity" in the apportionment of the responsibilities between superintendents and school boards, in practice, the lines are blurred (Lashway, 2002). Kowalski

and Brunner (2011) described the role of the school board as "public trustees who should make policy decisions in the best interest of the entire community" (p. 159). In actuality, school boards often make decisions in their best interest and those of their supporters (Kowalski & Brunner, 2011).

In Massachusetts, the delineation of governance responsibilities between the school board and the superintendent have been defined by the Education Reform Act of 1993. In 1995, then Massachusetts Commissioner of Education, Robert V. Antonucci, provided a comprehensive Advisory on School Governance following the enactment of the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993. With the superintendent as the "school committee's chief executive officer and educational advisor," and the school committee as the "board of directors," the roles of both the superintendent and school committee have, at times, been blurred, thus the advisory was issued (Antonucci, 1995). "The school committee establishes educational goals and policies for the schools in the district, consistent with the requirements of law and the statewide goals and standards established by the Board of Education (G.L.c.71[section]37)" (Antonucci, 1995).

Using the Massachusetts Educational Reform Act of 1993 as an impetus, the Massachusetts Department of Education identified areas of school governance with which the school committee, the superintendent and the school principal have varying levels of responsibility within each school district. The governance areas identified include (a) Educational Goal and Policies, (b) Management and Leadership, (c) Budget, (d) Staffing, (e) Selection and Purchase of Textbook and Educational Materials, and (f) School Councils: School-based Decision Making (Antonucci, 1995).

The school committee is considered the legislative branch of school systems. As such, the committee is responsible to set educational goals and policy; it is the responsibility of the

committee to evaluate both existing and new policies set-forth by the committee. The superintendent, along with other administrators, is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school system, while following the established district policies (Antonucci, 1995).

In a managerial role, the superintendent has the responsibility to keep the school committee informed of "major administrative decisions and procedures, enabling the school committee to access whether those administrative decisions conform to school committee policy" (Antonucci, 1995, p. 2).

In Massachusetts, the school committee has the obligation to review and approve the initial school budget. While the city or town appropriates a school budget, the school committee has the authority to determine how the money will be spent within the appropriation (Antonucci, 1995). The superintendent is responsible for the establishment of the budget, management of the appropriation and reporting to the committee on spending.

Based on the requirements set forth by the Massachusetts Educational Reform Act (1993), the superintendent is responsible for the appointment of most of the staff within the district. Within the guidelines set-forth by the school committee or found within collective bargaining agreements, the superintendent establishes contractual terms and compensation for all of his or her appointed employees.

The principal at each school, under the leadership of the superintendent, is responsible for the vetting and selection of textbooks and related educational materials. Procedures are often established by the school district to assist in the selection and adoption process. The superintendent is responsible to ensure that textbooks and materials selected by each school are consistent with the educational goals and policies established by the school committee (Antonucci, 1995).

The establishment of School Councils, the school based decision-making authority, was a hallmark of the Massachusetts educational reform efforts of 1993. “School councils, participatory decision-making and community partnerships strengthen and broaden the base of support for school improvement” (Antonucci, 1995, p.4). Superintendents do not hold membership on school councils; however, school councils, as part of the school improvement plan, make recommendations to the school committee and superintendent on such issues as “professional development, student learning time, parent involvement, safety and discipline, and ways to meet diverse learning needs” (Antonucci, 1995, p.4).

The roles and responsibilities of the superintendent range from being the instructional visionary for the community to ensuring school safety and security to managing the day-to-day operations of the district. Since the Massachusetts Educational Reform Act of 1993, the responsibilities of the school council, school committee, principal, and superintendent -- while at times intermingled and possibly confusing -- have empowered more individuals to be involved in school governance toward the goals of “improving educational opportunities and outcomes for students” (Antonucci, 1995, p.6). In the section that follows factors and conditions that impact the decision of qualified individuals not apply for a superintendent position is investigated.

Factors and Conditions That Discourage Individuals from Applying to Become a Superintendent

In 1999, Thomas Payzant, former Superintendent of Schools in Boston, Massachusetts, punctuated the importance of public education: "At no other time has there been as much interest in public education. Every social, political, and economic issue finds its way to the schoolhouse door in Boston” (as cited in Chaddock, 1999, p. 3). And this increased interest in public schools has added pressures to the role of the superintendent. As described in the previous sections, the

roles and responsibilities of the school superintendent have evolved and changed into what the position requires today. In the section that follows, the factors and conditions that discourage potential applicants of superintendent positions are investigated.

The position of the superintendent has increased in complexity over the previous decades, making the job far more difficult to achieve success; and with these increased demands, the number of qualified, interested individuals has decreased (Lashway, 2002).

Boehert and O'Connell (1999) identified the previously traditional path to district administration: teacher, to department chairperson, to assistant principal, to principal, to assistant superintendent, to superintendent. With fewer teachers willing to leave teaching positions, and "administrators reluctant to move within the administrative ranks… we see a limited number of applicants for upper level administrative positions" (p. 19). It can be hypothesized that qualified candidates are not choosing these positions for several key factors: unrealistic expectations, increased accountability, often unmanageable stress, high burnout, and decreased power and authority (Boehert & O'Connell, 1999; Lashway, 2002).

Wolverton (2004) studied superintendent certificate holders in the Pacific Northwest who are not applying for superintendent positions. In her research a number of common factors have been attributed to this pattern: the perceived negative aspects of the position, such as "poor media image, politics, and so forth coupled with low pay differential from current positions, may suggest that the rewards do not justify the effort they would have to expend doing the job" (p.11). Additionally, Dowell & Larwin (2013) believe that the compensation is not commensurate with the additional time and responsibilities of the superintendent position and a reason qualified candidates are choosing to not apply for the open positions.

A lack of job security, stress, being on call twenty-four hours a day, and an upset to

work-life balance are factors as to why qualified professionals are not choosing to become a superintendent (Wolverton, 2004; Wolverton & Macdonald, 2001). Wolfverton (2004) asserted that "life is too short to spend in a highly scrutinized, crisis-ridden position" (p.12). Achieving an acceptable work-life balance for the current generation of school leaders has been reported to be more important than that of the previous leaders, yet attainment of an appropriate balance continues to be difficult to achieve (Smith, Roebuck & Elhaddaoui, 2016). Professionals feel a greater need to be at home and in their home community, fathers are expected to be more present in their children's lives and technology helps and hinders the integration of personal and professional commitments (Smith, et al., 2016). With many so many certified, qualified administrators being central office administrators, the firsthand knowledge they glean from observing the superintendent may persuade them that the position is not worth the added labor required to succeed in the position (Wolverton, 2004).

The types and breadth of experience of one's career path, often dictates a decision to apply for a job as a superintendent (Wolverton & MacDonald, 2001). Historically, a male superintendent is more likely to become a superintendent directly from a high school principal position; while women have more often been curriculum leaders and central office administrators (Kolalski, 1999). It has been touted that the high school principalship may be the position in a system that most closely mirrors that of the superintendent. The managerial experience of the high school principal in areas such as facilities, operations, finances, human resources and school committee relations, have been deemed to produce a more attractive candidate than one with an instructional leadership background (Wolverton & MacDonald, 2001). It is often mistakes or problems in managerial areas, however, that have the potential for significant, negative consequences for the superintendent. "A colleague we once worked with summed up

superintendent operational success in three words: beans, buses, and business" (Eller & Carlson, 2009, p. 75). If the "beans" or the lunch program is not successful, if the "buses" or transportation do not run smoothly, and if the "business" or the fiscal management of the district is lacking transparency and strength, the superintendent will most likely not be successful, regardless of his or her instructional leadership ability (Eller & Carlson, 2009).

School Committee and Superintendent Relations

The role of the school committee in the leadership of the school district is one that has caused disharmony among many school committee members and superintendents. In Massachusetts, school committee members are bestowed with the power and authority to set district policy, budget priorities and to negotiate contracts with employees. However, school committee membership is often unpaid, part-time, and, due to a lack of professional experience, must rely on the information provided to them by the superintendent to make decisions on complex issues related to the governance and leadership of the district (Cuban, 1976). Conflicting, and often blurred lines of roles and responsibilities between school board members and superintendent has resulted in either an over-willingness or hesitancy by the committee to listen to or follow the advice of the superintendent (Petersen & Fusarelli, 2001). This tension was described as, "school boards behave like typical schizophrenics. On one hand, they willingly (indeed eagerly) give power away to the experts...On the other hand, they espouse an ideology of lay control" (Zeigler, 1975 as cited in Petersen & Fusarelli, 2001, p. 5). To assist in the effectiveness of the school committee and to educate their views, votes and leadership, successful superintendents spend a much time with individual committee members influencing their opinions (Petersen & Fusarelli, 2005). Unfortunately, when a decision results in an

unsuccessful endeavor or an unintended outcome, school committees and superintendents often blame each other, resulting in a lack of accountability (Fusarelli, 2006).

Sell (2006) identified three committee types when the superintendent and school committee don't work effectively together. The first, a "rubber stamp" committee, one that approves everything from the superintendent with little education, discussion or discourse. The second she describes as the "firefighters," a committee that rushes from one problem to another, fixing it for the minute, but never addressing the cause of the problem. And the third, a committee micromanages decisions at both the district and school level, impacting the autonomy of school leaders. Each of the three school committee types impact both the effectiveness of the committee and the success of the superintendent.

The election of school committee members can have a rippling effect on the superintendent and school community. Following changes in school committee membership, research has shown that it is not uncommon to see policy changes, revisions to district priorities, and changes to the day-to-day oversight (micro-management) of the district by individual committee members (Land, 2002). Additionally, when elections result in new school committee members, the superintendent may lack the same level of loyalty and support they received from the committee that hired them (Sparks, 2012). Regardless of the precipitating factors, when the school committee and superintendent do not work well together, it "paralyzes the school system. The press loves it--it's interesting reading. But hurts the district and kids and ultimately the staff" (Pascopella, 2001, p.40).

Teachers Union and Superintendent Relations

Many superintendents perceive the collective bargaining and labor relations as one of the most unpleasant aspects of the position (Cochren, 1995). In Massachusetts, G.L. chapter 150e

establishes the Collective Bargaining Law which governs the mandatory subjects of bargaining with public employees; in general, these subjects include wages, hours and conditions of employment. The Massachusetts Teachers Association has published for its members, a pamphlet that lists the over sixty items they believe are required to be bargained between the union and management (MTA). For many superintendents, relations between management and teachers is a constant struggle. Teachers unions across the country are constantly challenging the rights of management (school administrators) to adjudicate decisions based on their professional judgement and to make decisions in the best interest of organization and students, hiding behind the cloak of the teachers' contract (Cochren, 1999).

Phil Kugler (2014), assistant to the president of the American Federation of Teachers, has argued that while collaboration is a worthwhile goal, it is most difficult to achieve in education because of a lack of stability in school district leadership: "you have a constant revolving door of superintendents. A new one comes in, and you've got a whole new batch of priorities" (p. 40). Add to superintendent turnover the politics and elections of the school committee, and quickly the union is the only stable force in the district (Kugler, 2014). A successful labor-management partnership is based on mutual respect; and such a partnership comes out of strength and stability of leadership on both sides (Kugler, 2014). Additionally, union leadership and superintendents must make a commitment to collaboration because it takes time and hard work (Kugler, 2014).

Conclusion

The literature has described the position of the superintendent as one that has significantly evolved from the early days of the Old Deluder Satan Act of 1647 to today. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 provided superintendents with a clear mandate and responsibility to lead their respective districts with the assurance that all students can and will succeed. The

range of responsibilities for the superintendent today include being the instructional visionary for the community, ensuring school safety and security, and to managing the day-to-day operations of the district.

Many factors and conditions have been identified that discourage qualified individuals from pursuing the position of superintendent. Factor and conditions that may discourage one of applying for a superintendency include the perceived impact on their work-life balance, increased stress, a pay differential from their current position that is not commensurate with the increased responsibility and a lack of "managerial skills," such as fiscal management and oversight, facility supervision, and personnel administration.

Given the challenges and changes inherent in superintendency today, contributing to the data relative to why qualified individuals are choosing not to apply for open superintendent positions is important. This study sought to contribute to understandings about the factors and conditions qualified professionals value in their decision-making process. With the dearth of qualified individuals applying for open positions, such information can assist those in recruitment roles to entice qualified individuals to embrace the superintendent's position.

What follows in Chapter Three is a delineation of the study's Method: an overview of the research design, how participants were selected, the instruments used to collect data for each research question, the procedures used for data analysis, how issues of trustworthiness were addressed, and the delimitations and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the reasons certified, qualified central office administrators are deciding not to apply to superintendent positions. It has been reported in the media that over sixty superintendent positions are becoming vacant in Massachusetts each year and the pool of qualified candidates applying for the job is shrinking (Rosenberg, 2013). In designing this research, I sought to describe, analyze and understand the factors and conditions that impact an administrator's decision-making as it relates to not applying for the aforementioned position.

As a school administrator for almost twenty years – a principal/assistant principal for eight years, and the last twelve years as the assistant superintendent of schools – I have the certification and experiences to be strong candidate for a superintendent position. Several years ago, I endeavored to develop the necessary skills, knowledge, and confidence to become superintendent; and yet I continue to choose not to pursue the position. I have spoken with many colleagues who hold similar positions and have comparable experiences and they have also chosen not to apply for superintendent positions. Based on my reluctance to apply to become a superintendent, coupled with many of my colleagues sharing the same disinclination, it is important to investigate the perceptions of those professionals in the field choosing to not pursue the career advancement.

This study sought to identify the factors and conditions that influence central office administrators' decision not to apply for superintendent positions. Three research questions guided this study:

1. What do central office personnel consider to be the roles and responsibilities of the

superintendent?

2. To what degree do central office personnel feel they have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be superintendent?
3. What are the factors and conditions that central office personnel report, promote and inhibit them from applying for the position of superintendent?

This chapter delineates the specific aspects of the study. It describes the design of the study, selection of the participants, development of the instrument, and data collection procedures. Additionally, data analysis, issues of trustworthiness, delimitation, and limitations are detailed.

Overview of Research Design

This study was designed as a phenomenological, qualitative study that explored how and why central office administrators make the decision to not apply for superintendent positions. "Phenomenological methods are particularly effective at bringing to the fore the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives" (Lester, 1999, NP). The goal of the phenomenological approach is to describe the lived experience of the participants and to then make meaning based on the described experience (Creswell, 2014).

The study used two methods to gather data concerning the three research questions. Part one entailed an online questionnaire; and part two consisted of voluntary, follow-up interviews with selected participants. The questionnaire (see Appendix B) was intended to elicit specific responses from participants. It queried experiences, feelings, understandings, and perceptions related to (a) the responsibilities of the superintendent position, (b) their own preparation for the position, (c) their family and personal life, and (d) the influence of the aforementioned on their decision to not apply for the superintendent position. Additionally, demographic information

such as the respondents' gender, age, positions in education, years as an administrator, and years until retirement were collected. Once participants completed the online survey, four individuals engaged in a telephone, or in-person, interviews (see Appendix B).

Selection of Participants

In a phenomenological study, the lived experiences of the participants are studied. A theory is not the foundation of a phenomenological study, rather participants who have experienced the same phenomenon are the focus (Simon & Goes, 2011; Creswell, 2007). With the importance of what Creswell (2007) describes as a "purposeful sampling" (p. 125) to provide data related to the research question, the specific group studied held central office positions and had not applied for a superintendent position in the last two years.

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) reports there are 379 operating school districts in Commonwealth of Massachusetts, this includes both local and regional districts (doe.mass.edu). Each school district is required to have a Superintendent of Schools and each school district shall appoint a person to act as the Administrator of Special Education (doe.mass.edu). With no requirement for any additional central office, district-wide positions, school districts throughout the Commonwealth have created varying central office structures coupled with a myriad of central office titles; such position titles include, but are not limited to, Assistant Superintendent (of various areas), Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Business Manager/Official and Director of Teaching and Learning. Participants in this study all had central office, district-wide responsibilities.

A database of names and email addresses of central office administrators who work in districts located in southeastern Massachusetts was developed. Southeastern Massachusetts, the area between Boston and Cape Cod, is mix of affluent, middle-class and urban communities. The

study participants included central office administrators in both affluent and middle-class communities; urban school districts were not included in this study due to large student enrollment. The database developed used information obtained through the DESE, the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS), and district-websites.

Through my employment experience, coupled with discussions with colleagues regarding our roles and responsibilities, I believe I needed to control for the size of the district. In larger school districts, with a greater number of administrative and support personnel, central office administrators may not have the same level of involvement in the day-to-day operation of the school district, as an administrator in a smaller district. Therefore, to control for district size, all invited participants work in districts with greater than 1500 students and fewer than 3500.

An introductory message was emailed to forty-seven central office administrators on January 9, 2018, with a follow-up email on January 16, 2018 (Appendix A). Twenty-eight participants submitted responses to the questionnaire. While all invited participants held central office positions, the first question asked if they had applied for a superintendent position in the previous two years; if they answered yes, the survey ended. Six of the twenty-eight participants reported they had applied for a superintendent position in the past two years and didn't complete survey. Twenty-two central office administrators completed and submitted the survey.

Instrumentation

In this section, I explain the purpose and development of two instruments used to gather data for the study: questionnaire and interview protocol. In Phase One, a questionnaire was administered to participants. Phase Two consisted of interviews conducted using the interview protocol detailed in Appendix C.

Questionnaire. Following the identification of prospective participants, email messages

were sent to the participants that introduced myself, explained the purpose of the study, my interest in the study, directions to complete the study, the required IRB information, and a link to the Qualtrics online survey platform.

The online questionnaire (see Appendix B) was developed by me. Related to the three guiding questions, it was designed to assess a participant's experiences, feelings, understandings, and perceptions related to their decision not to apply for school superintendent positions. More specifically, questions about a participant's decision not to apply for superintendent positions included (a) current and future job satisfaction, (b) experiences in district-wide leadership, (c) familiarity with compliance related responsibilities, (d) family and personal responsibilities (work-life balance), (e) mentoring experiences by their superintendent, (f) professional goals, and (g) school committee membership and perceived difficulties with school committees.

Once the questionnaire was developed, it was shared with administrators who did not partake in the study. They were asked to share their perceptions regarding the clarity of the directions, understanding of the questions, and the ease of completing the survey with fidelity. Based on feedback garnered, some questions were re-evaluated for clarity and were rewritten as appropriate.

Within the questionnaire, the first section of questions ascertained the participant's beliefs regarding the importance of various tasks related to the superintendent position. The second section asked the participants to rate their knowledge and proficiency in the areas the superintendent may be responsible for. The section that followed asked questions to determine the perceived impact the position may have on the participant's personal life. The perceived impact of the school committee, and the degree to which their responsibilities and oversight may impact the participant's decision to not apply for a superintendent position, was asked in section

four. Section five included questions pertaining to district-wide responsibilities, such as fiscal compliance, policies and procedures, curriculum leadership, and collective bargaining, and how confident the participant feels in their ability to lead in those such areas. The next two sections related to the application and interview process for a superintendent, and the participant's prior professional experiences, job satisfaction, and mentoring. The final section collected a multitude of demographic information.

A five-point Likert Scale was used to collect the participants answers to the questions. The Likert Scale is an effective method to determine the extent to which someone agrees or disagrees with a statement, thus "tapping into the cognitive and affective components of attitudes" (McLeod, 2008, NP). In addition to the Likert Scale, participants were invited to add comments in various sections of the questionnaire.

Interview. Interviews are important to gain a better understand as to how study participants interpret their own perceptions (Weiss, 1994). Follow-up interviews were scheduled with four participants in order to obtain a greater understanding of the factors and conditions that had an impact on their decisions pertaining to the desire, or lack-there-of, of attaining a superintendent position.

The interviews were recorded to allow me to be more attentive to the interviewee, to not lose any content of the conversation and to provide greater opportunity to directly quote participants (Weiss, 1994). Additionally, notes were taken in the event that the audio recording became unusable.

An interview protocol was developed by me and was followed for each interview (see Appendix C). While asking similar questions to the questionnaire, the interview provided an

opportunity for the participants to expound on their thoughts and feelings of the superintendency. Examples of similar questions crafted for the interview included:

1. Of all the responsibilities of a school superintendent, what do you believe are the most important? Most challenging? Most rewarding?
2. Do you think you will be a good/effective superintendent? What experiences have you had that have best prepared you for the position?
3. Why do you believe a shortage of certified, qualified Superintendent candidates exists in Massachusetts and across the country? What needs to change in education for people to want these district leadership positions?

Collection of Data

In this section, specific approaches are presented to explain how data were collected for each of the three research questions.

The questionnaire was distributed via email to forty-seven central office administrators in the southeastern portion area of Massachusetts. The message sent included a letter of introduction, request for participation and a link to the Qualtrics electronic survey (Appendix A). Following the initial distribution, a follow-up email was disseminated approximately two weeks later to those who has not responded or had not completed the-questionnaire. A total of twenty-two participants completed the full online questionnaire.

Question 1: What do central office personnel consider to be the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent?

This question was designed to elicit responses relative to the central office administrators understanding of the superintendent positions; specifically, the various roles and responsibilities of the position. In question one of the questionnaire, nine areas of responsibility a superintendent

may oversee or be directly responsible for were identified. Participants were asked how important they believed the responsibilities were to the superintendent position. The responses were collected using a five-point Likert Scale: 1- *extremely important,* 2 - *very important, 3 -moderately important,* 4 -*slightly important,* 5 -*not at all important*. In follow-up interviews, participants were asked to delve deeper regarding the knowledge and skills required of the superintendent.

Question 2: To what degree do central office personnel feel they have the knowledge, skills and dispositions to be superintendent?

The second research question's purpose was to ascertain the participant's beliefs regarding their own knowledge, skills, and dispositions regarding the superintendent position that may contribute to the position not being desirable to them. Participants were asked questions intended to discern participant's perceptions of their own knowledge, skills, and dispositions as they relate to decision to not apply for a superintendent position. Using the five-point Likert Scale, 1- *extremely knowledgeable,* 2- *very knowledgeable,* 3- *moderately knowledgeable,* 4 - *slightly knowledgeable,* and 5 - *not knowledgeable* -- participants were asked about their own knowledge in the areas of fiscal compliance, policies and procedure, vision and goal setting, providing leadership to the school committee, engaging with town departments and community members, curriculum leadership, and collective bargaining.

Participants were also asked to what degree being responsible for fiscal compliance, policies and procedure, vision and goal setting, providing leadership to the school committee, engaging with town departments and community members, curriculum leadership, and collective bargaining has an impact on their decision-making process. In follow-up interviews, participants elaborate on their knowledge, skills, and dispositions to become a superintendent.

Question 3: What are the factors and conditions that inhibit central office personnel from applying for the position of superintendent?

The third research question was designed to determine the factors and conditions that prevent central office personnel from applying for superintendent position. The questionnaire included questions that measure the impact of application, interview and hiring process on a participant's decision to not apply for a position. Additionally, the questionnaire inquired as to the mentoring and encouragement of the participant's current superintendent and other educational professionals who provide both informal and formal mentoring to the study participant. In follow-up interviews, conversations provided a deeper understanding of the beliefs of the position and what would need to change in order for the participant to pursue the position.

Data Analysis Procedures

In phase one of the study, twenty-eight central office administrators responded to the survey using the Qualtrics survey platform. Twenty-two central office administrators qualified for and completed the survey, resulting in a total of twenty-two study participants. The nature of a phenomenological study assumes all participants have experienced the phenomenon in question (Creswell, 2007); the six participants that did not complete the study did not share in the phenomenon, each had applied for superintendent positions in the past two years.

Once the data collection window closed, the data from the final twenty-two participants were analyzed using Qualtrics. A measure of variability, or the degree of dispersion among scores, was evaluated for each question on the survey (Huck, 2008). Knowing the dispersion among the scores help to determine the variability of the answers.

The data collected were then analyzed using simple frequency distributions and measures

of central tendency: mean and mode (Huck, 2008). Using participant's demographic information – gender, age, and satisfaction in their current position – data were further evaluated for frequency and central tendency, mean and mode. Cross tabulation analysis further provided the opportunity to consider the impact of information such as: gender, age, years in a central office position, and satisfaction in their current position, on the factors and conditions leading them to not apply for superintendent positions.

Prior to engaging the four participants in the interview phase of the study, I received permission to audio-record and note-take during the session. The audio-recording was used to supplement the notes taken to provide a comprehensive transcript of the interview. Interviews ranged in length from a minimum of ten minutes to a maximum of twenty minutes. Following the completion of the interview sessions, MaxQDA software was purchased to assist in the coding and analysis of the interview transcripts.

Analysis of the interview data used elements described by Creswell (2007) as a "simplified version of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Kenn method" (p. 159). The analysis consisted of listing significant statements relative to the phenomenon, grouping significant statements into "meaning unit or themes", writing "textural descriptions of the experience" – what the participants have experienced, and finally how the phenomenal experience occurred for each interview participant (p.159). The themes that emerged in the data are presented and discussed in Chapter Four.

Issues of Trustworthiness

I am an assistant superintendent with twenty-eight years of experience in public education. The positions I have held include teacher, assistant principal, principal, and assistant superintendent. The myriad of experiences I have had, coupled with the leadership education I

have received at Boston College (M.Ed.) and Lesley University, have provided the lenses from which this study was conceived, designed, and undertaken. My formal education along with my experiences produce a bias that could influence the dependability of this study. As the investigator, it was important that I, as much as possible, suspend, or "bracket," my own experiences and bias, allowing for the possibility of alternative perspectives on the perceived phenomenon (Creswell, 2007).

The online questionnaire was developed and tested to be void of my own biases toward the reasons I have chosen to not become a superintendent. My own bias was determined through introspection as to the reasons I have chosen to not become a superintendent at this time. During follow-up interviews with central office administrators, a conscious attempt was made to remove any of my own bias that could have influenced participant's responses to their own perspectives and lived experiences. During interviews, I asked pre-established questions, recorded participants answers, and stayed void of extraneous facial expressions and voice inflection. Due to my professional relationship with participants, the nature and title of the study, and the criteria for being a participant in the study, I predict some bias in the data collected. During analysis of the data, great care and effort was made to ensure my own bias did not interfere with the interpretation of the participants' experiences and perceptions; however, fully suspending, or bracketing, one's personal experiences in a phenomenological study is difficult to implement (Creswell, 2007).

Both the questionnaire and the interview asked participants to describe the mentoring they have received, encouragement to become a superintendent and opportunities for additional leadership within their current district. Due to the personal nature of these questions and the possibility of the negative descriptions of their current employer and supervisor, the need for

privacy and anonymity is of the upmost importance. In order to ensure confidentiality, any identifiable information regarding the participant or their district has been scrubbed from the data and interpretation.

To ensure confidentiality and security of the data collected, information obtained via both the questionnaire and interview was stored in a password protected computer. All data will be destroyed in no longer than five years.

Delimitations and Limitations

In this section I describe delimitations, or parameters I imposed on the study to narrow its scope. Additionally, possible limitations that may exist are discussed.

Participants in the study consisted of current central office administrators. While all school districts have a superintendent, by title and responsibility, the titles and responsibilities of central office administrators varied greatly from district-to-district. Therefore, the titles of the participants were not a concern. What was important is that all participants were certified as a superintendent and assistant superintendent, and that they had responsibilities district-wide. Specifically, the participants include twenty-two central office administrators who are employed in Southeastern Massachusetts. In order to control for district size, all participants worked in districts with greater than 1500 students and fewer than 3500. The delimitation on district size eliminated large and very small school district administrators, whose roles and responsibilities may differ greatly from those employed in medium suburban districts.

Based on the geographical area being studied, I had personal knowledge of and professional relationships with many study participants. This relationship has had no impact on the analysis of data.

What follows in Chapter Four is a presentation and analysis of the data collected through

surveys and interviews.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify the factors and conditions that influenced central office administrators' decision to not apply for superintendent positions. I sought to gain a better understanding of the perceived hindrances central office professionals both observe and experience as they relate to the position of school superintendent. The following questions guided the study:

1. What do central office personnel consider to be the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent?
2. To what degree do central office personnel feel they have the knowledge, skills and dispositions to be superintendent?
3. What are the factors and conditions that central office personnel report promote and inhibit them from applying for the position of superintendent?

Chapter Three describes how the research questions were addressed. The study applied a phenomenological design; only professionals whom had experienced the phenomena were studied. Specifically, study participants were current central office administrators, certified by the State of Massachusetts Department of Education (DESE) as a Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent, and had not applied for a superintendent position in the past two years. The study utilized both an online questionnaire and follow-up interviews with selected participants. Qualtrics, an online questionnaire platform, was used to collect questionnaire data; additionally, selected participants were identified for and agreed to provide follow-up interviews.

Chapter Four is organized into five sections. The first section represents the demographic data about the participants. Sections two through four present and analyze the data according to the three research questions. The final section provides a summary of the findings.

Demographic Information Section One of the online questionnaire solicited demographic specific information from each participant. That information included (a) gender, (b) age range, (c) marital status, (d) number of children, (e) years until retirement, and (f) satisfaction in current position.

This information is presented in Tables 4.1 - 4.3. Eligible participants must have held a central office position and not have applied for a superintendent position in the past two years.

Online questionnaires were distributed to forty-seven individuals identified as central office administrators in school districts in Southeastern Massachusetts. Twenty-eight central office administrators started the questionnaire, six reported they had applied for superintendent position during the past two years, thus ineligible to complete the questionnaire; twenty-two central office administrators completed the questionnaire. Additionally, four participants agreed to engage in an interview to further discuss their decision-making process related to not applying to superintendent positions.

Table 4.1 that follows presents data regarding the gender and age range of participants who completed the questionnaire.

Table 4.1

Gender and Age Range of Questionnaire Respondents

Demographic Subgroup	# of Respondents	% of Respondents
Gender		
Female	17	77%
Male	5	23%
Total	22	

Age Ranges by Gender	M	% of Respondents	F	% of Respondents
>40	0	0%	1	4.5%
41-45	1	4.5%	2	9%
46-50	4	18%	8	36%
51-55	0	0%	2	9%
56-60	0	0%	2	9%
<60	0	0%	2	9%

The results presented in Table 4.1 show more than three times as many females (17) than males (5) completed the questionnaire. Two participants were over 60 years old and one was under 40 years old. The age range of 46-50 accounted for over 54% of the participants. Four participants agreed to and were interviewed.

Table 4.2 provides a synopsis of the demographic information relative to the four interview participants.

Table 4.2

Interview Participants

	Male/Female	Age	Years Until Retirement
Administrator A	Male	54	6-9 years
Administrator B	Male	56	6-9 years
Administrator C	Female	58	3-5 years
Administrator D	Female	49	10-14 years

As shown in Table 4.2, four central office administrators were interviewed for this study; two were male and two were female, ranging in age from 49 years old to 58 years old. One study participant anticipates retiring in 3-5 years, two participants in 6-9 years and one participant anticipates retiring in 10-14 years.

Respondents were asked their satisfaction with their current employment. Table 4.3 represents the satisfaction in their current position, broken down by gender. The following were available responses: (1) *Very satisfied* - I could/may remain in this position for the remainder of my career; (2) *Satisfied* - I would only leave if the "perfect" opportunity was presented to me; (3) *Somewhat satisfied* - If the right opportunity was available, I would pursue it; (4) *Not satisfied* - I am currently looking for another position.

Table 4.3

Satisfaction of Current Employment by Gender

	Very Satisfied	*Satisfied*	*Somewhat Satisfied*	*Not satisfied*
Gender				
Female	7	10		
Male	1	3	1	
% of Respondents	36%	59%	5%	0%

Table 4.3 shows that ninety percent of the respondents were either *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with their current employment. Almost sixty percent reported they would only leave their current position if the “perfect” opportunity was presented to them. Seven (32%) of the female respondents reported they were very satisfied with their job and could remain for the remainder of their career, while one male reported the same.

The data described in Table 4.4 is the participant’s satisfaction with their current position, based on their age. The following were possible responses: (1) *Very satisfied* - I could/may remain in this position for the remainder of my career; (2) *Satisfied* - I would only leave if the "perfect" opportunity was presented to me; (3) *Somewhat satisfied* - If the right opportunity was available, I would pursue it; (4) *Not satisfied* - I am currently looking for another position.

Table 4.4

Satisfaction of Current Employment by Age

Age	*Very Satisfied*	*Satisfied*	*Somewhat Satisfied*	*Not Satisfied*
Under 40 years old	1			
41-45 years old	1	2		
46-50 years old	2	8	1	
51-55 years old	2			
56-60 years old	2			
Over 60 years old	1			
% of Respondents	37%	59%	4%	0%

The data in Table 4.4 show the satisfaction of the participants, by age, with their current employment. The data indicate that, regardless of age, only five-percent (one respondent), is *somewhat satisfied* with their current employment. Ninety-five percent of the respondents were either *very satisfied* or *satisfied* with their current employment.

Respondents were asked to identify the number of years they would work until they anticipate retiring. Those data are presented in Table 4.5, by gender.

Table 4.5

Anticipated Years Until Retirement by Gender

Years Until Retirement	Female	Male	% of Respondents
<2 years	2		9%
2-5 years	2		9%
6-9 years	3	2	23%
10-14 years	6	1	31%
>15 years	4	2	27%

The data presented in Table 4.5 show that more than half of the participants (13) anticipate working more than ten years until retirement, and less than twenty percent (4) anticipate working less than five years until retirement.

Table 4.6 represents the satisfaction in their current position, broken down by years until retirement. The following were available responses: (1) *Very satisfied* - I could/may remain in this position for the remainder of my career; (2) *Satisfied* - I would only leave if the "perfect" opportunity was presented to me; (3) *Somewhat satisfied* - If the right opportunity was available, I would pursue it; (4) *Not satisfied* - I am currently looking for another position.

Table 4.6

Job Satisfaction Based on Years Until Retirement

	Very Satisfied	*Satisfied*	*Somewhat Satisfied*	*Not Satisfied*	*Other*
Years Until Retirement					
Less than 2 years		1			1
2-5 years	2				
6-9 years	3	2			
10-14 years	1	6			
More than 15 years	1	4	1		

% of Respondents	32%	58%	5%	0%	5%

Table 4.6 indicates that a majority, ninety percent, of participants are either very satisfied or satisfied with their current employment, regardless of years until retirement. However, eighty-six percent of those participants with between 10-14 years until retirement indicated they would leave if presented with the perfect opportunity, this is a higher percentage than any other category.

Table 4.7 presents the marital status of the study participants, single, married, divorced or in a relationship, as well as the number of children, if any, of the study participants.

Table 4.7

Participants Marital Status and Number of Children

	Single	Married	Divorced	In a Relationship
Male	1	4		
Female	2	12	3	
% of Respondents	14%	72%	14%	0%

	No children	0- may want to start a family	1-3 children	More than 4 children
Male	1		4	
Female	5		12	
% of Respondents	27%	0%	73%	0%

The marital status and number of children portion of the survey identified 72% of the respondents were married, 14% divorced and 14% single. When asked about the number of children of each participant, 27% of respondents had no children and 73% had 1-3 children.

In summary, the demographic data presented a picture of the diverse group of participants in the study. Female participants accounted for 77% and male participants 23%; 18% were under 45 years old, 63% between the ages of 46 and 55 years old and 18% over 56 years old; 36% of the participants were *very satisfied* in their current position, 59% were *satisfied* and 5% were *somewhat satisfied;* no participants reported being *not satisfied* with their current employment. Interviews were conducted with four central office administrators. The two male participants were between 54-56 years old and each had between 6-9 years until retirement. Of the female interview participants, one was 58 years old with between 3-5 years until retirement and the other 49 years old, with 10-14 years until her anticipated retirement.

The following three sections present and analyzes data collected from the twenty-two online surveys and the four follow-up participant interviews as they related to the three research questions of the study:

1. What do central office personnel consider to be the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent?
2. To what degree do central office personnel feel they have the knowledge, skills and dispositions to be superintendent?
3. What are the factors and conditions that central office personnel report promote and inhibit them from applying for the position of superintendent?

Research Question One: What do central office personnel consider to be the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent?

Research Question One sought to identify the roles and responsibilities the study participants believed were essential to the superintendent position. In looking to determine why qualified, certified central office administrators are choosing to not apply for superintendent positions, the participants understanding of the responsibilities of the superintendent needed to be understood. Participants self-reported own knowledge, skills and dispositions in these areas are discussed in Question Two.

Data presented for this research question are organized in tabular form, based on specific survey questions. Survey Question One was designed to garner data about the participants beliefs regarding the importance a variety of responsibilities that may be placed upon the superintendent: leading curriculum and instruction; supervising principals; providing leadership to school committee; attending and engaging with member of the community during after school activities; working closely with town officials on topics important to the schools; advocating at the local, state and federal level for issues pertinent to the local district; managing and overseeing the school department budget; and providing leadership in the area of collective and noncollective bargaining with employees.

Table 4.8 shows data collected for Survey Question One: How important do you believe the following responsibilities are for a superintendent of school? These data are presented using a five-point Likert scale, 1 - *extremely important,* 2 - *very important,* 3 - *moderately important,* 4 - *slightly important,* and 5 - *not Important at all.* Nine tasks often associated with the position of

superintendent are summarized. The results described in Table 4.8 are analyzed according to measures of central tendency: mean and mode.

Table 4.8

Superintendent Task Importance

	Mean	Mode
Curriculum and instruction leadership	1.88	2
Provide the vision and goals for the district	1.25	1
Supervision of principals	1.50	1
Provide leadership to the school committee	1.33	1
Attend and engage with members of the community during after school activities (athletics, dram, music, etc.)	1.92	2
Work closely with town officials on topics important to the schools	1.42	1
Advocate and the local, state and federal level for issues pertinent to the local district	1.79	1 and 2
Manage and oversee the school department budget	1.58	1
Ability to provide leadership in the area of collective and non-collective bargaining with employee	1.46	1

The data presented in Table 4.8 indicate that the study participants agreed most often that to "Provide the vision and goals of the district" was an *Extremely Important* (mean: 1.25, mode: 1) responsibility of the superintendent. Conversely, study participants identified "Attend and engage with members of the community during after school activities (athletics, drama, music, etc.)" least often as *Extremely Important* (mean:1.92, mode:2).

Each of the roles and responsibilities presented were identified by participants as being some degree of important, none were identified as not important to the role of the superintendent. In Table 4.9, the importance of the identified responsibilities of the superintendent is reported by

gender. These data are presented using a five-point Likert scale, 1 - *extremely important*, 2 - *very important*, 3 -*moderately important*, 4 - *slightly important*, and 5 - *not important at all*. The results described in Table 4.9 are evaluated according to the mean of the data collected.

Table 4.9

Superintendent Task Importance Reported by Gender

	Mean	
	Male	Female
Curriculum and instruction leadership	2.20	1.76
Provide the vision and goals for the district	1.00	1.35
Supervision of principals	1.80	1.41
Provide leadership to the school committee	1.60	1.18
Attend and engage with members of the community during after school activities (athletics, dram, music, etc.)	2.40	1.82
Work closely with town officials on topics important to the schools	1.80	1.35
Advocate at the local, state and federal level for issues pertinent to the local district	2.60	1.59
Manage and oversee the school department budget	1.60	1.59
Ability to provide leadership in the area of collective and noncollective bargaining with employees	1.40	1.47

Table 4.9 indicates that male study participants identified the ability to provide the district with a vision and goals (mean: 1.00) and the ability to provide leadership in the area of collective and noncollective bargaining (mean: 1.40) as the *extremely important* to the superintendent position. Female study participants identified, more often than other responsibilities, provide leadership to the school committee (mean: 1.18) as *extremely important*. Administrator A, during his interview, identified the superintendent as only needing a general

understanding of curriculum and instruction. He added that, unlike other responsibilities of the superintendent, a strong, complementing district-level leader, with expertise in the area of curriculum and instruction, can plug any hole in knowledge the superintendent may have in the area of curriculum and instruction (November 13, 2018).

Table 4.9 also shows that female participants in the study reported that leadership in curriculum and instruction was the responsibility of the superintendent, not another district leader (mean: 1.76). Additionally, females at a slightly higher rate than male participants, believe the superintendent has an obligation to attend and engage with community members at afterschool activities such as athletics, music and drama events (female mean: 1.82, male mean: 2.40).

Tables 4.10 – 4.12 describe how important the tasks are to the superintendent position, based on participants age. Survey Question #2 asked: How important do you believe the following responsibilities are for a superintendent of school? Using a five-point Likert scale, 1- *extremely important*, 2 - *very important*, 3- *moderately important,* 4 - *slightly important*, and 5- *not important at all*, nine tasks often associated with the position were presented.

Table 4.10

Superintendent Task Importance Reported by Age Range

	Under 40 years old	41-45 years old
	Mean	Mean
Curriculum and instruction leadership	3.00	2.00
Provide the vision and goals for the district	2.00	1.67
Supervision of principals	2.00	2.67
Provide leadership to the school committee	1.00	2.67
Attend and engage with members of the community during after school activities (athletics, dram, music, etc.)	4.00	1.67
Work closely with town officials on topics important to the schools	3.00	2.67
Advocate at the local, state and federal level for issues pertinent to the local district	1.00	2.33
Manage and oversee the school department budget	3.00	2.33
Ability to provide leadership in the area of collective and non-collective bargaining with employees	1.00	2.33

The data in Table 4.10 show the beliefs regarding the importance of tasks of associated with the position of superintendent for study participants who are under 40 years old and between 41-45 years old. The data convey that those under 40 years old believe providing leadership to the school committee, advocate at the local, state and federal level for issues pertinent to the local district and the ability to provide leadership in the area of collective and non-collective bargaining with employees, is *extremely important* (mean: 1.00). The data show, attend and engage with members of the community during after school activities, as *slightly important* (mean: 4.00). For those participants between 41-45 years old, providing the vision and goals for the district and attend and engage with members of the community during after school

activities are identified as most important (mean: 1.67). In the 41-45-year-old age group, all other tasks were identified as *very important* to *moderately important* (mean: 2.00-2.67).

Table 4.11

Superintendent Task Importance Reported by Age Range

	46-50 years old Mean	51-55 years old Mean
Curriculum and instruction leadership	2.09	1.00
Provide the vision and goals for the district	1.18	1.50
Supervision of principals	1.27	1.50
Provide leadership to the school committee	1.00	1.50
Attend and engage with members of the community during after school activities (athletics, dram, music, etc.)	1.82	2.50
Work closely with town officials on topics important to the schools	1.09	2.00
Advocate at the local, state and federal level for issues pertinent to the local district	1.82	2.50
Manage and oversee the school department budget	1.27	2.00
Ability to provide leadership in the area of collective and non-collective bargaining with employees	1.18	2.00

The data in Table 4.11 show the beliefs regarding the importance of tasks of associated with the position of superintendent for study participants who are 46-50 years old and 51-55 years old. The data convey that those between 46-50 years old believe to provide leadership to the school committee, *extremely important* (mean:1.00). Additionally, the data for this age range convey all the tasks identified as being *extremely* or *very important* (mean range: 1.00 to 2.09).

For those participants 51-55 years old, curriculum and instruction leadership were identified as *extremely important*, Likert Scale average of 1.00.

Table 4.12

Superintendent Task Importance Reported by Age Range

	56-60 years old	Over 60 years old
	Mean	Mean
Curriculum and instruction leadership	1.33	1.50
Provide the vision and goals for the district	1.00	1.00
Supervision of principals	1.00	1.50
Provide leadership to the school committee	1.00	1.00
Attend and engage with members of the community during after school activities (athletics, dram, music, etc.)	2.00	1.50
Work closely with town officials on topics important to the schools	1.00	1.00
Advocate at the local, state and federal level for issues pertinent to the local district	1.33	1.50
Manage and oversee the school department budget	1.33	1.50
Ability to provide leadership in the area of collective and non-collective bargaining with employees	1.67	1.00

The data in Table 4.12 show the beliefs regarding the importance of superintendent tasks for study participants who are 56-60 years old and over 60 years old. The data convey that those between 56-60 and over 60 years old identify provide the vision and goals for the district, supervision of principals, provide leadership to the school committee, and work closely with town officials on topics important to the schools as *extremely important* (mean:1.00).

Participants over 60 years old also identified the ability to provide leadership in the area of collective and noncollective bargaining with employees, as *extremely important* (mean: 1.00).

In summary, Table 4.10 – 4.12 report on data for survey question one, by participants' age. The data shows that participants between 46 and 50 years old and over 60 years old consistently believe that each of the listed tasks are *extremely* (1.0) or *very* (2.0) important to the role of the superintendent. Conversely, participants under age 40 and between 41-45 had a greater degree of variance in their beliefs regarding the importance of the aforementioned tasks, with responses ranging from e*xtremely important* (1.0*) to* s*lightly important* (4.0).

Tables 4.10 – 4.12 show that providing a vision and goals for the district is a task identified, regardless of age, as *extremely* or *very important* to the role of the superintendent. Providing leadership to the school committee, advocate at the local, state and federal level for issues pertinent to the local district, as well as ability to provide leadership in the area of collective and non-collective bargaining with employees are areas participants reported varying degrees of importance to the superintendent position. Participants ages 56 and over more consistently identified all the listed tasks as important to the superintendent position with a mean of 1.66 or higher.

Delineation of Findings for Research Questions One

All participants have a clear understanding of the responsibilities, identified in the survey as tasks, associated with the position of superintendent. Analysis of the data concerning Research Question One – What do central office personnel consider to be the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent? – led to one finding about the role and responsibilities of the superintendent.

Finding #1: All study participants, regardless of age or gender, had a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent. The data from the

online survey as shown in tables 4.8- 4.12, and discussed in interviews, participants have an understanding of the breath of responsibilities and tasks for which the superintendent is responsible. As identified in Table 4.10, younger central office administrators were less likely to identify all the tasks as *extremely* or *very important*, but all tasks were identified as having a degree of importance. Male participants reported that providing the vision and goals for the district is the most important responsibility of the superintendent (mean: 1.00), while female participants reported that both providing the vision and goals for the district and work closely with town officials on topics important to the schools were most important (mean: 1.35). Of the superintendent tasks presented, advocate at the local, state and federal level for issues pertinent to the local district was identified as least important (male mean: 2.60, female mean: 1.59).

The following section describes the data collected relative to Research Question Two: how participants feel about their own knowledge, skills and disposition relative to the superintendent position.

Research Question Two: To what degree do central office personnel feel they have the knowledge, skills and dispositions to be superintendent?

Through Research Question Two I had hoped to understand whether the study participants believed they had the knowledge, skills and dispositions to be a superintendent. Using the same categories used in Research Question One related to the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent, participants were asked to rate their own knowledge, skills and dispositions using a five-point Likert scale, 1 - *extremely knowledgeable/proficient*, 2 - *very knowledgeable/proficient*, 3- *moderately knowledgeable/proficient*, 4 - *slightly knowledgeable/proficient*, and 5 - *not knowledgeable/proficient*. Additionally, during interviews, participants were asked Question #3: What experiences have you had that have best prepared you

with the knowledge and skills required for the position of superintendent? (See Appendix C).

Table 4.13 presents and discusses data related to how the participants rate their own proficiency in the identified areas of responsibility of the superintendent. Using a 5-point Likert scale, 1- *extremely knowledgeable/proficient,* 2 - *very knowledgeable/proficient,* 3 - *moderately knowledgeable/proficient,* 4 - *slightly knowledgeable/proficient,* and 5 - *not knowledgeable/ proficient,* nine tasks often associated with the position of superintendent were presented, using measures if central tendency, mean and mode.

Table 4.13

Participants Knowledge and Proficiency

	Mean	Mode
Curriculum and instruction leadership	1.72	2
Provide the vision and goals for the district	1.83	2
Supervision of principals	2.06	2
Provide leadership to the school committee	2	1
Attend and engage with members of the community during after school activities (athletics, dram, music, etc.)	2.17	2
Work closely with town officials on topics important to the schools	2.17	2 and 3
Advocate at the local, state and federal level for issues pertinent to the local district	2.67	3
Manage and oversee the school department budget	2.44	2 and 3
Ability to provide leadership in the area of collective and non-collective bargaining with employees	2.33	1

Data in Table 4.13 show that when asked to rate their own knowledge and proficiency in specific areas related to the role of superintendent, curriculum and instruction leadership is the area participants identified as having the greatest knowledge and proficiency. Advocate at the local, state and federal level for issues pertinent to the local district was the area most often identified as the area the participants felt they had the least knowledge and proficiency, with the most often selected identifier being *moderately knowledgeable/proficient*. Manage and oversee the school department budget and ability to provide leadership in the area of collective and non-collective bargaining with employees were the two areas with the greatest divergence in self-reported skills, knowledge and disposition.

Table 4.14 identifies the percent of male and female study participants who rated their own knowledge as extremely or very knowledgeable in the specific area. Using a 5-point Likert scale, 1- *extremely knowledgeable/proficient*, 2 -*very knowledgeable/proficient*, 3 - *moderately knowledgeable/proficient*, 4 - *slightly knowledgeable/proficient*, and 5- *not knowledgeable/proficient*, nine tasks often associated with the position of superintendent were presented.

Table 4.14

Participants Knowledge and Proficiency Reported by Gender

	Mean	
	Male	Female
Curriculum and instruction leadership	1.75	1.62
Provide the vision and goals for the district	1.75	1.85
Supervision of principals	2.25	1.92
Provide leadership to the school committee	1.25	2.15
Attend and engage with members of the community during after school activities (athletics, dram, music, etc.)	2.00	2.23
Work closely with town officials on topics important to the schools	1.50	2.31
Advocate at the local, state and federal level for issues pertinent to the local district	2.50	2.69
Manage and oversee the school department budget	2.00	2.62
Ability to provide leadership in the area of collective and non-collective bargaining with employees	1.50	2.54

As shown in Table 4.14, overall, when asked to rate their own knowledge and proficiency, male central office administrators felt, at a higher percentage than women, they had the skills and knowledge necessary to be a superintendent. Evidence collected from both the survey and interviews identified supervision of principals, as well as the management and oversight the school department budget as the only areas all the male participants did not feel either *extremely knowledgeable/proficient* or *very knowledgeable/proficient*.

During his interview, Administrator A, when asked about the skills and knowledge he had for the superintendent position, replied, “When I watch what my superintendent does and knows, I feel like I really could do the job… I don't believe he has any more knowledge or skills

than I do" (November 13, 2018). Administrator B shared similar sentiments, adding, "The only real difference between what I know and what my superintendent knows is that he was never a principal, I was, and I think that experience will only help me be an effective superintendent" (November 13, 2018).

Female central office administrators reported a wider range of their own perceived skills, knowledge and disposition. Ninety (90) percent reported they believe they are *extremely* or *very knowledgeable/proficient* in the area of curriculum and instruction leadership, with almost forty (40) percent reported they were only *moderately* or *slightly knowledgeable/proficient* in providing leadership to the school committee and nearly fifty-five (55) percent believe they are *moderately, slightly knowledgeable* or *not knowledgeable/proficient* in their ability to provide leadership in the area of collective and noncollective bargaining.

Tables 4.15 – 4.17 present the participants ratings, by age range, of their own skills and knowledge as they relate the identified responsibilities of the superintendent. Using a 5-point Likert scale, 1- *extremely knowledgeable/proficient*, 2 -*very knowledgeable/proficient*, 3 - *moderately knowledgeable/proficient*, 4 - *slightly knowledgeable/proficient,* and 5- *not knowledgeable/proficient*, nine tasks often associated with the position of superintendent were presented.

Table 4.15

Participants Knowledge and Proficiency Reported by Age Range

	Under 40 years old	41-45 years old
	Mean	Mean
Curriculum and instruction leadership	3.00	2.00
Provide the vision and goals for the district	2.00	1.67
Supervision of principals	2.00	2.67
Provide leadership to the school committee	1.00	2.67
Attend and engage with members of the community during after school activities (athletics, dram, music, etc.)	4.00	1.67
Work closely with town officials on topics important to the schools	3.00	2.67
Advocate at the local, state and federal level for issues pertinent to the local district	1.00	2.33
Manage and oversee the school department budget	3.00	2.33
Ability to provide leadership in the area of collective and non-collective bargaining with employees	1.00	2.33

Data in Table 4.15 show participants under 40 years old report to be *extremely knowledgeable/proficient* (mean: 1.00) in providing leadership to the school committee and advocate at the local, state and federal level for issues pertinent to the local district. The data also show those under 40 years old report being *slightly knowledgeable/proficient* (mean: 4.00) to attend and engage with members of the community during after school activities. Curriculum leadership work closely with town officials on topics important to the schools and manage and oversee the school department budget resulted in a response of *moderately knowledgeable/proficient* (mean: 3.00).

The data for participants age 41-45 years old indicate they are *very knowledgeable/proficient* (mean:1.67) in providing the vision and goals for the district and attend and engage with members of the community during after school activities. As reported for the other tasks, participants 41-45 years old are *very knowledgeable/proficient* (mean: 2.33- 2.67).

Table 4.16

Participants Knowledge and Proficiency Reported by Age Range

	46-50 years old Mean	51-55 years old Mean
Curriculum and instruction leadership	2.09	1.00
Provide the vision and goals for the district	1.18	1.50
Supervision of principals	1.27	1.50
Provide leadership to the school committee	1.00	1.50
Attend and engage with members of the community during after school activities (athletics, dram, music, etc.)	1.82	2.50
Work closely with town officials on topics important to the schools	1.09	2.00
Advocate at the local, state and federal level for issues pertinent to the local district	1.82	2.50
Manage and oversee the school department budget	1.27	2.00
Ability to provide leadership in the area of collective and non-collective bargaining with employees	1.18	2.00

Data in Table 4.16 show study participants age 46-50 years old are *extremely knowledgeable/proficient* (mean: 1.00) in providing leadership to the school committee. Curriculum and instructional leadership was the only area 46-50 year old participants rated their

knowledge as a mean of 2.09, *very knowledgeable/proficient,* other areas were reported with a mean of 1.09- 1.82, *extremely knowledgeable/proficient.*

The data for participants age 51-55 years old show knowledge in the area of curriculum and instruction leadership as *extremely knowledgeable/proficient* (mean: 1.00). For those participant 51-55 years old, to manage and oversee the school department budget and the ability to provide leadership in the area of collective and non-collective bargaining with employees was reported as *very knowledgeable/proficient* (mean: 2.00).

Table 4.17

Participants Knowledge and Proficiency: Reported by Age Range

	56-60 years old	Over 60 years old
	Mean	Mean
Curriculum and instruction leadership	1.33	1.50
Provide the vision and goals for the district	1.00	1.00
Supervision of principals	1.00	1.50
Provide leadership to the school committee	1.00	1.00
Attend and engage with members of the community during after school activities (athletics, dram, music, etc.)	2.00	1.50
Work closely with town officials on topics important to the schools	1.00	1.00
Advocate at the local, state and federal level for issues pertinent to the local district	1.33	1.50
Manage and oversee the school department budget	1.33	1.50
Ability to provide leadership in the area of collective and non-collective bargaining with employees	1.67	1.00

Data in Table 4.17 show study participants 56 years old to over 60 years old report they are *extremely knowledgeable/proficient* in numerous areas: provide the vision and goals for the district, provide leadership to the school committee, and work closely with town officials on topics important to the schools with a mean of 1.00.

Delineation of Findings for Research Questions Two

Analysis of the data concerning Research Questions Two – To what degree to central office personnel feel they have the knowledge, skills and dispositions to be superintendent? – led to one finding regarding the participants perceived knowledge, skills and dispositions, as related to the superintendent position.

Finding #2: A majority of central office administrators believe they possessed the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be a superintendent, but have chosen to not ascend to the position. Tables 4.15 – 4.17 indicate that majority of study participants believe they are *extremely* or *very knowledgeable/proficient* in the areas identified to be an effective superintendent. Participants expressed that they believed they had the skills and experience to be a superintendent. Male participants reported in each category, a higher rate of proficiency, than females in the same categories.

During interviews, an earlier unidentified theme emerged regarding the skills needed to be an effective superintendent: participants believe superintendents must be consummate politician. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines as a politician as, “a person experienced in the art or science of government; especially one actively engaged in conducting the business of a government” (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/politician). One participant best summarized the feelings of numerous interviewees, “being a politician is not why I went into

education- I am an educator- I want to have a direct impact on the student learning- I don't want to spend my time dealing with government and government bureaucracy" (Administrator C, November 6, 2018).

In the following section, Research Question Three explores the reasons why qualified, certified central office administrators are choosing to not become superintendents.

Research Question Three: What are the factors and conditions that central office personnel report promote and inhibit them from applying for the position of superintendent?

The purpose of Research Question Three was to determine the factors and conditions that prevent central office personnel from applying for superintendent position. In the survey, participants were asked to indicate the degree to which the following factors and conditions has impacted their decision to not apply for superintendent positions: the impact of the job responsibilities, the school committee, district-wide responsibilities and leadership, the application, interview and hiring process, and individual experiences and mentors.

Table 4.18 presents data related to influences that may impact the decision-making process in applying for a superintendent position. Using a 5-point Likert scale, 1- *strongly agree*, 2 - *somewhat agree,* 3 - *neither agree or disagree,* 4- *somewhat disagree,* and 5- *strongly disagree,* eight possible reasons or influences as to why a certified, qualified central office administrator would choose not to apply for a superintendent position, were presented to the participants.

Table 4.18

Influences on Participants Decisions to NOT to Apply for Superintendent Positions

	Mean	Mode
Having a diminished quality of life	1.73	1
The impact on my current work-life balance	1.32	1
Decreased direct contact with students and staff	2.64	3
The compensation does not correlate with the increased responsibility	2.27	2
I am appropriately compensated for the responsibilities I currently have	2.05	2
The job stability is less than my current position and I'm not willing to take the risk	2.68	1
It is not the right time for me to make a job/career change	1.77	1
I do not believe I will have the same level of job satisfaction as a superintendent, as I have now	2.14	1

The data presented in Table 4.18 indicate the impact on my current work-life balance (mean: 1.32) and having a diminished quality of life (mean: 1.73) as the reasons most often identified as a deterrent to applying for a superintendent position. Conversely, a lack of job stability (mean: 2.68) is the area with the least impact on the participants decision to not become a superintendent.

Table 4.19 identifies the influences that may impact the decision-making process in applying for a superintendent position, reported by male and female. Using a 5-point Likert scale, 1- *strongly agree,* 2 - *somewhat agree,* 3 - *neither agree or disagree,* 4- *somewhat disagree,* and 5- *strongly disagree*, eight possible reasons or influences as to why a certified,

qualified central office administrator would choose not to apply for a superintendent position, were presented to the participants.

Table 4.19

Influences on Participants Decisions to NOT to Apply for Superintendent Positions Reported by Gender

	Male		Female	
	Mean	Mode	Mean	Mode
Having a diminished quality of life	1.80	1	1.71	1
The impact on my current work-life balance	1.60	1	1.24	1
Decreased direct contact with students and staff	2.80	3	2.59	4
The compensation does not correlate with the increased responsibility	2.40	2	2.24	2
I am appropriately compensated for the responsibilities I currently have	1.60	1	2.18	2
The job stability is less than my current position and I'm not willing to take the risk	2.40	2	2.76	1 and 4
It is not the right time for me to make a job/career change	2.20	2 and 3	1.65	2
I do not believe I will have the same level of job satisfaction as a superintendent, as I have now	3.40	5	1.76	1

Table 4.19 presents a comparison of data collected from male and female study participants. Female study participants believe, at a slightly higher rate than their male counterparts, that a superintendent position will result in a diminished quality of life and have an

impact on their work-life balance. Additionally, the data show female study participants *strongly agree* that it is not the right time for them to make a job or career change (mean: 1.65) and *strongly agree* they will not have the same level of job satisfaction as a superintendent as they are afforded now. Male participants *strongly agree (*mean: 1.60) and female participants *agree* (mean: 2.18) that they are that they are appropriately compensated for the responsibilities they currently have.

The degree to which the School Committee's roles, responsibilities, elections and agenda may impact the central office administrators' decisions related to applying for a superintendent position are described in Table 4.20. The question: Impact of the School Committee: To what degree the following have influenced your decision to NOT apply for superintendent positions. Using a 5-point Likert scale, 1- *strongly agree*, 2 - *somewhat agree,* 3 - *neither agree or disagree,* 4- *somewhat disagree*, and 5- *strongly disagree*, participants were asked to rate the influence the following had on their decision making regarding seeking a superintendent position.

Table 4.20

The Influence of the School Committee

	Mean	Mode
The public nature of the supervision and evaluation of the superintendent by the school committee (usually noneducators)	2.18	1
The possibility of school committee turnover during my tenure	2.36	2
The impact of school committee member's personal agenda on the direction of the district, and consequently, my time	1.95	1

The relationship between the school committee and the town/city governing board	2.55	2

Table 4.20 presents the data related to the impact of the school committee and their influence on the participants desire to apply for a superintendent position. Study participants were most concerned with the impact of school committee member's personal agenda on the direction of the district with a mean of 1.95 and mode of 1. Additionally, the public nature of the superintendent's evaluation is an area that has an impact on the participants decision-making process (mean 2.18). Of least concern to the participants was the relationship between the school committee and the town leadership and governance (mean 2.55).

Presented by the study participants gender, Table 4.21 describes the degree to which the School Committee's roles, responsibilities, elections and agenda may impact the participants decisions related to applying for a superintendent position. Using a 5-point Likert scale, 1- *strongly agree*, 2 - *somewhat agree*, 3 - *neither agree or disagree*, 4- *somewhat disagree*, and 5- *strongly disagree*, participants were asked to rate the influence the following had on their decision making regarding seeking a superintendent position.

Table 4.21

The Influence of the School Committee Reported by Gender

	Male		Female	
	Mean	Mode	Mean	Mode
The public nature of the supervision and evaluation of the superintendent by the school committee (usually noneducators)	2.40	3	2.12	1
The possibility of school committee turnover during my tenure	2.20	2	2.41	2
The impact of school committee member's personal agenda on the direction of the district, and consequently, my time	2.20	2	1.94	1
The relationship between the school committee and the town/city governing board	2.40	3	2.59	2

The data presented in Table 4.21 indicate that female study participants *strongly agree* (mean: 1.94) that they are concerned about the impact of school committee member's personal agendas on the direction of the district and their own time' whereas men study participants *agree* (mean: 2.20). Additionally, female study participants, at a greater degree than male participants, are concerned with the public nature of the supervision and evaluation of the superintendent (mean-female: 2.12, male: 2.40).

Table 4.22 introduces four statements regarding district-wide responsibilities of the superintendent. Participants were asked to evaluate the impact of the responsibilities on their decision to not apply for superintendent positions, using a 5-point Likert scale, 1- *strongly agree*, 2 - *somewhat agree,* 3 - *neither agree or disagree,* 4- *somewhat disagree,* and 5- *strongly disagree*.

Table 4.22

The Impact of District-Wide Responsibilities and Leadership

	Mean	Mode
Being responsible for fiscal compliance	3.09	3
Being responsible for district policies and procedures	3.14	3 and 4
Being responsible for negotiations with school department unions	3.05	4
Providing leadership in curriculum development as it relates to state standards	3.64	5

Each of the four indicators in Table 4.22 produced a mean score of >3.00 (*neither agree or disagree*), and modes between 3 and 5 (*neither agree or disagree and strongly disagree*). Based on the data, participants reported that the district-wide responsibilities outlined in the survey did not have a significant impact on their decisions to not apply for superintendent positions.

Table 4.23 presents four statements regarding district-wide responsibilities of the superintendent, based on the participants gender. Participants were asked to evaluate the impact of the responsibilities on their decision to not apply for superintendent positions, using a 5-point Likert scale, 1- *strongly agree*, 2 - *somewhat agree,* 3 - *neither agree or disagree*, 4- *somewhat disagree,* and 5- *strongly disagree*.

Table 4.23

The Impact of District-Wide Responsibilities and Leadership Reported by Gender

	Male		Female	
	Mean	Mode	Mean	Mode
Being responsible for fiscal compliance	3.20	2	3.06	4
Being responsible for district policies and procedures	3.00	3	3.18	4
Being responsible for negotiations with school department unions	3.20	3	3.00	4
Providing leadership in curriculum development as it relates to state standards	3.40	3	3.71	4

Each of the four indicators in Table 4.23 produced a mean score of >3.00 (*neither agree or disagree*). Most often, female study participants *somewhat disagree* (mode: 4) that the district-wide responsibilities outlined impact on their decision making. Male study participants most often indicated they *neither agree or disagree* (mode: 3.00) that the district-wide responsibilities outlined in the survey did not have a significant impact on their decisions to not apply for superintendent positions.

Table 4.24 identifies aspects of the superintendent interview process and asked participants to evaluate the impact of the interview process on their decision to not apply for superintendent positions, using a 5-point Likert scale, 1- *strongly agree*, 2 - *somewhat agree*, 3 - *neither agree or disagree*, 4- *somewhat disagree,* and 5- *strongly disagree*.

Table 4.24

The Impact of the Application, Interview and Hiring Process

	Mean	Mode
I'm unsure of my qualification and ability to be offered a superintendent position at this time	2.77	4
The preparation and submission of an application and the interview process is unfamiliar to me	3.91	4
The public nature of the superintendent's application and interview process	2.82	1 and 4
The public scrutiny of a superintendent's contract	2.73	1 and 4
The professional organizations I belong to have provided professional development in the area of application and interviewing for the superintendent position	2.55	1

Table 4.24 shows the responses in this section of the survey. The application, interview, and hiring process for the superintendent of schools provided varying responses to the statements listed. With a three (3.00) on the Likert Scale indicating neither agree or disagree with the statement, the mean for four of the five questions was between 2.55 and 2.82; indicating that the application process is not a major impediment to the participants desire to become a superintendent. Participants reported (mode:1) that the professional organizations they belong to provide professional development in the area of application and interviewing for superintendent positions.

Based on the gender of the study participants, Table 4.25 identifies aspects of the superintendent interview process and asked participants to evaluate the impact of the interview process on their decision to not apply for superintendent positions, using a 5-point Likert scale,

1- *strongly agree,* 2 - *somewhat agree,* 3 - *neither agree or disagree,* 4- *somewhat disagree,* and 5- *strongly disagree.*

Table 4.25

The Impact of the Application, Interview and Hiring Process Reported by Gender

	Male		Female	
	Mean	Mode	Mean	Mode
I'm unsure of my qualification and ability to be offered a superintendent position at this time	2.60	2	2.82	4
The preparation and submission of an application and the interview process is unfamiliar to me	4.00	5	3.88	4
The public nature of the superintendent's application and interview process	3.20	5	2.71	4
The public scrutiny of a superintendent's contract	3.20	5	2.59	4
The professional organizations I belong to have provided professional development in the area of application and interviewing for the superintendent position	3.00	1,2,3,4 &5	2.41	1

The data presented in Table 4.25 indicate that male study participants *agree* (mean 2.60, mode:2) that they are unsure of their qualification and ability to be offered a superintendent position at this time. While the mean (2.82) for female study participants was similar to that of the male participants (2.60), the most often selected response for female participants indicated they *somewhat agree* (mode: 4) they are unsure of their qualifications and ability to be offered a superintendent position.

Table 4.26 presents data related to the study participants mentor experience related to the superintendent position and their overall desire to become a superintendent. The responses were

collected using a 5-point Likert scale, 1- *strongly agree,* 2 - *somewhat agree,* 3 - *neither agree or disagree,* 4- *somewhat disagree,* and 5- *strongly disagree,*

Table 4.26

Professional Experiences and Mentors

	Mean	Mode
I have been mentored and encouraged by my superintendent to apply for superintendent positions	3.45	4
I have been mentored and encouraged by an educational professional to apply for a superintendent position.	3.45	4
My superintendent has discouraged me from applying from applying for superintendent positions.	3.91	5
After observing my superintendent/mentor, I have decided that the position is not for me.	2.41	1
I do not have the confidence to be a leader of an entire school organization.	3.32	5
I have no desire or ambition to be a superintendent	2.86	4

The data presented in Table 4.26 show that after observing their superintendent/mentor, a majority of study participants have determined that the superintendent position is not one they aspire to at this time. Study participants *strongly disagree* that their superintendent has discouraged them from becoming a superintendent, their superintendent has not discouraged them from the position. Additionally, participants report they *strongly disagree* that they don't have the confidence to be a leader of an entire school or organization.

Based on the gender of the study participants, Table 4.27 shows the data related to participants professional experiences and mentors. The responses were collected using a 5-point

Likert scale, 1- *strongly agree,* 2 - *somewhat agree,* 3 - *neither agree or disagree,* 4- *somewhat disagree,* and 5- *strongly disagree*.

Table 4.27

Professional Experiences and Mentors Reported by Gender

	Male		Female	
	Mean	Mode	Mean	Mode
I have been mentored and encouraged by my superintendent to apply for superintendent positions	3.20	3	3.53	4
I have been mentored and encouraged by an educational professional to apply for a superintendent position	3.40	4	3.47	4 and 5
My superintendent has discouraged me from applying from applying for superintendent positions.	3.20	3	4.12	5
After observing my superintendent/mentor, I have decided that the position is not for me.	3.40	4	2.12	1
I do not have the confidence to be a leader of an entire school organization.	4.20	5	3.06	1,4 & 5
I have no desire or ambition to be a superintendent	3.80	3 and 4	2.59	1 and 4

The data presented in Table 4.27 show that after observing their superintendent/mentor, female study participants most often *strongly agree* that the superintendent position is not for them (mean: 2.12; mode: 1). Conversely, male study participants indicated that they *somewhat disagree* that observing their superintendent/mentor has had an impact on deciding the position was for them (mean: 3.14; mode: 4). Male study participants reported they *neither agree or disagree* or *somewhat disagree* that they do not have the desire or ambition to be a

superintendent (mean: 3.80; mode: 3 and 4); while female study participants had a greater divergence in responses, ranging from *strongly agree* to *somewhat disagree* (mean: 2.59; mode: 1 and 4).

Delineation of Findings for Research Questions Three

Research Question Three sought to identify the factors and conditions that have both promoted and inhibited central office administrators from applying for superintendent positions. Throughout the online survey and during interviews, the reasons to not apply for the position of superintendent were continually in the forefront.

The perception that becoming a superintendent will result in a diminished quality of life and will impact on one's work-life balance, were the areas often identified as an inhibitor to becoming a superintendent. Ninety-five (95) percent of respondents *strongly or somewhat* agree that becoming a superintendent will have a negative impact on their quality of life and/or will negatively impact their work-life balance. Additionally, during interviews, every participant confidently reported that their current position afforded them the opportunity to enjoy a work-life balance and "good" quality of life. Each was concerned that becoming a superintendent would impact this balance. As one interviewee reported, "I have watched my superintendent age ten years since he became the superintendent -- less than three years ago… he is under constant stress and I know it has impacted his life outside work, including his marriage." Administrator C, went onto explain, "Our community expects their superintendent to be at every school event, every meeting, and then be visible and available to parents during morning school drop-and afternoon pick-up…the community has unrealistic expectations about his schedule…people really don't understand what he does all day and they always want more…" (Administrator C, November 6, 2018).

I was interested in examining the relationship between one's current pay and that of a superintendent to better understand if compensation was factor in deciding to apply for a superintendent position. Superintendents are compensated at a higher rate than the central office administrators in their district, and most often they are the highest paid employee in the town. Approximately eighty-five (85) percent of respondents believe they are appropriately compensated for their current responsibilities. It was of the opinion of the participants that the compensation superintendents receive does not correlate to the additional responsibilities, time and expectations placed upon superintendents. As one interviewee stated, "you couldn't pay me enough money for the headaches my superintendent deals with day in and day out" (Administrator D, November 7, 2018). Another participant, with laughter, said that she may become a superintendent for the last five to six years of her career, "I can apply my skills and knowledge to move a school district forward… What is five years… can do anything for five years… and in the process get more money to enjoy in retirement" (Administrator A, November 13, 2018).

Finding #3: A majority of study participants conveyed that becoming a superintendent of schools would have a negative impact on their quality of life.

As indicated in Table 4.18 study participants *strongly agree* that becoming a superintendent will result in a diminished quality of life (mean: 1.73, mode: 1) and becoming a superintendent will negatively impact their current work-life balance (mean: 1.32, mode:1).

Finding #4: A majority of study participants imagined they would have a decreased level of job satisfaction if they were to become a superintendent. Table 4.18 illustrates the trepidation of study participants regarding future job satisfaction should they become a superintendent. When asked to respond to the statement, "I do not believe I will have the same

level of job satisfaction as a superintendent, as I have today," the most common response was *strongly agree* (mode: 1).

Finding #5: A majority of study participants deemed that it was not the right time in their career and/or personal life to make a career change from their current central office position to that of the superintendent.

The data presented in Table 4.18 suggest participants believe the time is not right to make a change in their job or career. The following statement was presented, "it is not the right time for me to make a job/career change," the mean score was 1.77, *strongly agree*, with a mode of 1.

Finding #6: A majority of study participants reported that they do not believe the increased salary of a superintendent correlates to the increased job responsibilities.

Table 4.18 presents data indicating participants belief that the compensation for a superintendent does not correlate to the job responsibilities. When participants were asked if they believe the compensation for a superintendent correlates with the increased responsibility of the position, participants *agree (*mean: 2.27, mode: 2).

Finding #7: A majority of study participants indicated concern with the impact of school committee members' personal agendas.

In Table 4.19, the most frequently reported response was participants *strongly agree* that "the impact of school committee members' personal agendas on the direction of the district, and consequently, my time," has influence their decision to not apply for a superintendent position (mean: 1.95, mode: 1).

Finding #8: A majority of study participants stated that they are familiar with the application and interview process for a superintendent position.

The data collected in Table 4.21, the Impact of the Application, Interview and Hiring Process, indicated participants are familiar with the application and interview process. As indicated in the Table, with a mean of 3.91, and a mode of 4, a majority the participants somewhat *disagree* or *disagree* that they are unfamiliar with the preparation and submission of an application and the interview process for a superintendent.

Chapter Summary

This study was designed to identify the factors and conditions that influence central office administrators' decision to not apply for superintendent positions. The use of twenty-one tables provided a detailed data presentation. Through a thorough analysis of the data, themes emerged that provided insight regarding the phenomenon of why qualified, certified central office administrators are choosing to not apply for superintendent positions.

The chapter is organized into four subsections. First, I present the demographic information of the study participants. This study included a diverse group of participants. Twenty-two participants completed this study, 77% were female and 23% male.; 18% were under 45 years old, 63% between the ages of 46 and 55 years old and 18% over 56 years old. Interviews were conducted with four central office administrators. The two male participants were between 54-56 years old and each had between 6-9 years until retirement. Of the female interview participants, one was 58 years old with between 3-5 years until retirement and the other 49 years old, with 10-14 years until her anticipated retirement.

In sections two through four, I discussed the data collected for the three research questions: What do central office personnel consider to be the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent?, To what degree do central office personnel feel they have the knowledge, skills and dispositions to be a superintendent?, and What are the factors and conditions that central

office personnel report promote and inhibit them from applying for the position of superintendent?

Section Two presented the data collected relative to Research Question One, which sought to identify the roles and responsibilities the study participants believed were essential to the superintendent position. The responses indicated that all participants have a clear understanding of the responsibilities associated with the position of superintendent. Research Question One led to one finding regarding the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent: All study participants, regardless of age or gender, had a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent.

Section Three presented data relative to the Research Question Two, whether central office personnel feel they have the knowledge, skills and dispositions to be a superintendent. The data collected and presented indicated that a majority of study participants believed they are *extremely* or *very knowledgeable* in the areas identified as required to be an effective superintendent. Research Question Two led to one finding: A majority of central office administrators possessed the knowledge, skills and dispositions to be a superintendent, but have chosen to not ascend to the position.

Section Four presented the data collected for research question three: What are the factors and conditions that central office personnel report promote and inhibit them from applying for the position of superintendent? Participants were asked how the job responsibilities of the superintendent; the influence of the school committee; the array of district-wide responsibilities and leadership; and the application, interview, and hiring process influenced their decision to not apply for a superintendent position. Research Question three led to six findings regarding the reasons certified, qualified central office administrators are choosing to not become

superintendent. A majority of study participants: (a) conveyed that becoming a superintendent of schools would have a negative impact on their quality of life, (b) imagined they would have a decreased level of job satisfaction if they were to become a superintendent, (c) deemed it was not the right time in their career and/or personal life to make a career change from their current central office position to that of the superintendent, (d) reported that they do not believe the increased salary of a superintendent correlates to the increased job responsibilities, and (e) stated that they are familiar with the application and interview process for a superintendent position.

What follows in Chapter Five is a study summary, discussion of the findings, suggestions for future research, and final reflections.

CHAPTER FIVE: STUDY SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, FUTURE RESEARCH, AND FINAL REFLECTIONS

Introduction

At twenty-two years old, I began my career as teacher, and at age thirty I became an educational leader; initially as a middle school assistant principal, then as a middle school principal, and most recently an assistant superintendent of schools. Throughout the early years of my career, my professional goal was to become a school superintendent. As a central office administrator for over ten years, working hand-in-hand with my superintendent, my aspirations to become a superintendent have waned.

I have worked as an educational leader in one district since 2005. During that time, the district experienced challenging economic times, which resulted in the reduction of twenty-five percent of the staff. And yet it weathered that crisis and has emerged with strong community support for increased school funding and the construction of a $96 million-dollar school building. I have worked with very supportive, knowledgeable school committee members who have had a clear understanding of their role in the leadership and governance of the school-district; conversely, I have endured school committee members with personal, divisive agendas. Throughout both the challenging and opportune times, each and every day I have had a front-row seat to witness the responsibilities and burdens that face the superintendent of schools.

My successful experiences as a teacher, curriculum leader, assistant principal, principal and assistant superintendent primarily responsible for business and operations, have afforded me the opportunity to have the breath of responsibilities to become a successful superintendent. Over the past few years, several appealing superintendent positions became available, colleagues have encouraged me to apply, and yet I have declined. I have spent time reflecting on my current job responsibilities, the community for which I serve, my family, my financial compensation, and

my job satisfaction and made a conscious decision to not become a superintendent; that isn't to say I will never apply for superintendent positions. At this time in my life, however, the position of superintendent is not one I wish to pursue, contrary to the career aspirations I once had.

It has been widely reported that a shortage of certified, qualified superintendent candidates exists, and yet I have chosen to not become a superintendent. I was curious as to why others in similar situations were also choosing to not become superintendents, and so I conducted this study to find out the factors and conditions that impact certified, qualified central office administrator's decision to not apply for superintendent positions

This final chapter provides concluding remarks about this study. It restates the context of the study, provides a summary of the study, and presents a discussion of both practical and theoretical implications and conclusions stemming from the findings. Future research recommendations on this topic, and a final reflection conclude the chapter.

Summary of the Study

This study investigated the premise that many qualified, certified, experienced central office administrators are choosing not to become school superintendents. As a result, the candidate pool for superintendent positions is both smaller and less experienced that it potentially would be if qualified central office administrators were to apply for available positions. The position of the superintendent has increased in complexity, making the job far more difficult to achieve success; and with the increased demands, the number of qualified, interested individuals has decreased (Lashway, 2002).

The purpose of this study was to first determine what central office administrators believed to the be the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent. Second, did the study participants believe they had the knowledge, skills, and disposition to be a superintendent? And

finally, what were the factors and conditions that either promote or inhibit the central office administrators from applying for open superintendent positions? The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What do central office personnel consider to be the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent?
2. To what degree do central office personnel feel they have the knowledge, skills and dispositions to be superintendent?
3. What are the factors and conditions that central office personnel report promote and inhibit them from applying for the position of superintendent?

The study was designed as a phenomenological, qualitative study, consisting of an online survey and a follow-up interview with selected individuals. Twenty-eight participants began the survey, six reported they had applied for superintendent positions in the previous two years. In sum, twenty-two central office administrators completed the survey, and four participants engaged in follow-up interviews. Based on the geographical area being studied, I had personal knowledge of and professional relationships with many study participants. I do not feel this relationship has had any impact on the analysis of the data.

This study led to eight findings. A majority of study participants: (1) held a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent; (2) possessed the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be a superintendent, but have chosen to not ascend to the position; (3) conveyed that becoming a superintendent of schools would have a negative impact on their quality of life; (4) imagined they would have a decreased level of job satisfaction if they were to become a superintendent; (5) deemed that it was not the right time in their career and/or personal life to make a career change from their current central office position to that of the

superintendent; (6) reported that they do not believe the increased salary of a superintendent correlates to the increased job responsibilities; (7) indicated concern with the impact of school committee members' personal agendas; and (8) stated that they are familiar with the application and interview process for a superintendent position.

The next section discusses the findings of this study in greater depth, providing both practical and theoretical implications, and recommendations for educational leaders, professional organizations, and future researchers.

Discussion

The position of superintendent of schools is one that has changed tremendously since the early days of public education in the United States of America. With one-fifth of the Massachusetts school superintendents leaving or retiring from their position in a given year, the pool of certified, qualified candidates applying for these positions is shrinking (Rosenberg, 2016). This study that investigated the reasons certified, qualified central office administrators are choosing to not apply for the numerous, open superintendent positions in Massachusetts led to eight findings. Each of the findings is discussed below.

Discussion of Finding #1. All study participants, regardless of age or gender, had a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent

Results presented and analyzed in Chapter Four indicate that all the participants understood the functions, charge and duties associated with the position of superintendent of schools.

Practical implications. For Finding One, all central office administrators showed evidence of having a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent of schools. Overwhelmingly, providing a vision and goals for the district was viewed as the most

important responsibility of the superintendent. Conversely, advocate at the local, state and federal level for issues pertinent to the local district was deemed to be least important.

Evidence from Finding One suggests that certified, qualified central office administrators have a clear, unambiguous understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent of schools.

Theoretical Implications. The research indicates that the qualities and qualifications needed to be a successful superintendent may vary from district to district. However, several common traits and skills are needed to be successful, regardless of the district: effective communication skills, a clearly articulated vision, administrative experience, strong community engagement, and demonstrated qualities that inspire trust and confidence (Kallio, 2013).

Recommendations. Finding One indicates that the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent have been observed by and thoroughly articulated to central office administrators in southeastern Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Educations (DESE), in collaboration with the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS), and the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC), should continually communicate and provide leadership in the area of the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent.

Discussion of Finding #2. A majority of central office administrators possessed the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be a superintendent, but have chosen to not ascend to the position.

Results presented and analyzed in Chapter Four indicate that central office administrators believe they have the knowledgeable and skills in the areas identified to be an effective superintendent.

Practical Implications. For Finding Two, the evidence suggests that participants lack of knowledge or skills is not the reason participants are choosing not to become superintendents. On the contrary, the participants in this study believe they have the skills and knowledge to be a superintendent but are choosing not to.

Theoretical Implications. The research suggests that to be an effective superintendent one must have a series of common traits and skills, identified in Finding One: effective communication skills, a clearly articulated vision, administrative experience, strong community engagement, and demonstrated qualities that inspire trust and confidence (Kallio, 2013).

The data collected in this study suggest that qualified, certified central office administrators have both the understanding of the position, as well as the necessary skills, knowledge, and disposition to successfully execute the responsibilities of the superintendency.

Recommendations. Through programs such as the MASS Assistant Superintendent Leadership Seminar (ASLS), professional development should continue to ensure qualified, certified central office administrators have the skills, knowledge and confidence to pursue superintendent positions.

Discussion of Finding #3: A majority of study participants conveyed that becoming a superintendent of schools would have a negative impact on their quality of life.

Results presented and analyzed in Chapter Four indicate that a majority of the participants were concerned that if they became a superintendent their current quality of life would be negatively impacted.

Practical implications. For Finding Three, many school committees, and subsequently communities, expect the superintendent to devote an unreasonable amount of time and emotional energy to the community they serve; thus, potentially producing a work-life imbalance,

negatively impacting the superintendent's quality of life. As the data collected in Chapter Four indicate, this is a major impediment to those qualified and certified to be a superintendent. School committees and communities must have reasonable expectations of the superintendent and their time; a well-balanced superintendent means a more effective superintendent.

Theoretical Implications. The research suggests that a well composed work-family-life balance is believed to produce well-being; whereas, an imbalance promotes high levels of stress, a diminished quality of life, and a less effectiveness at work (Greenhaus, Collins and Shaw, 2003). Additionally, Greenhaus, et. al (2003), describe three types of balance required to ensure work-life balance, "Time balance: an equal amount of time devoted to work and family roles; Involvement balance: an equal level of psychological involvement in work and family roles; and, Satisfaction balance: an equal level of satisfaction with work and family roles" (p. 513).

Recommendations. A component of a superintendent induction program needs to include how to effectively balance the needs of the district with your individual and family needs. Such a component might include assisting new superintendents in prioritizing the events, games, and meetings they are asked or expected to attend outside of the typical workday. Through a shared understanding with the school committee, the superintendent can be present at events in the community they serve and also strike an appropriate balance between work and personal commitments.

Discussion of Finding #4: A majority of study participants imagined they would have a decreased level of job satisfaction if they were to become a superintendent.

Results presented and analyzed in Chapter Four indicate that a majority of the participants were concerned that if they became a superintendent, they would experience a decreased level of job satisfaction.

Practical implications. Relative to Finding Four, everyone has good days and bad days at work; however, enjoying an overall level of job satisfaction goes hand-in-hand with one's quality of life. As was discussed relative to Finding Three, school committees and communities must have reasonable expectations of the superintendent; only holding him/her responsible for that which he/she can control. Additionally, federal, state, and local educational (and noneducational) mandates for schools need to be reviewed, evaluated, prioritized.

Theoretical Implications. The research suggests the following are predictors of a superintendents' job satisfaction: his/her relationship with the school board; the impact of local, state and federal mandates; potential funding problems and the superintendent's compensation (Young, Kowalski, McCord & Petersen, 2012). If superintendents are unhappy in their position, their ability to effectively lead their organization may be negatively impacted.

Recommendations. Sharp and Walters (2009) have stated that the relationship between the superintendent and the school board sets the tone for the tenure of the superintendent, and that a positive relationship is vital for success of both the superintendent and the district. Schools and communities must have reasonable expectations of the superintendent and pay them a competitive wage for the position they hold. Policymakers at the local, state, and federal level must take note of the lack of qualified, certified candidates for superintendent positions and work to make the position more appealing to attract qualified leaders.

Discussion of Finding #5: A majority of study participants deemed that it was not the right time in their career and/or personal life to make a career change from their current central office position to that of the superintendent.

Results presented and analyzed in Chapter Four indicate that the most participants believe that the time is not right for them to make a career change.

Practical Implications. Relative to Finding Five, with study participants anticipating a diminished quality of life and decreased job satisfaction should they become a superintendent, it is not a surprise that a majority of the participants reported that the time was not right for them to make a career change. The perception of the superintendent position is that it is thankless and the expectations unrealistic. As a result, attracting quality, qualified applicants will continue to be problematic for school committees.

Theoretical Implications. The research suggests lack of job security, stress, being on call twenty-four hours a day and an upset to work-life balance are factors as to why qualified professionals are not choosing to become a superintendent (Wolverton, 2004; Wolverton & Macdonald, 2001). Additionally, being central office administrators, the study participants have firsthand knowledge from observing their superintendent which may persuade them that the position is not worth the added labor required to succeed in the position.

Recommendations. Being one step away from the top job in a school district is appealing to many central office administrators. As central office administrators, they believe their compensation, job satisfaction and work-life balance are appropriate to the job they perform. Should the relative compensation and responsibilities of the superintendent change, qualified, certified central office administrators may be more likely to apply for superintendent positions.

Discussion of Finding #6: A majority of study participants reported that they do not believe the increased salary of a superintendent correlates to the increased job responsibilities.

Results presented and analyzed in Chapter Four indicate that a most participants believe that the compensation for a superintendent is not adequate for the increased job responsibilities.

Practical Implications. Relative to Finding Six, the school superintendent is often the highest paid employee in a city or town but is also responsible for the largest budget and the largest number of employees of any department in the city or town. Prior to a search for a new superintendent, or while negotiating successor agreements with current superintendents, the establishment of a competitive compensation package is necessary and must be created to ensure the superintendent is appropriately remunerated for the time, responsibility and leadership required of him or her to be an effective leader.

Theoretical Implications. The research suggests that the public nature of a superintendent's contract can be a liability for the superintendent and may have an impact on the job satisfaction of the superintendent (Young, et. al, 2012). Unlike a CEO or the president of a company in the private sector, compensation for the superintendent is often negotiated in an open, pubic session with the school committee and the contract document is public information.

Recommendations. The salary for the superintendent must correlate to the additional oversight and responsibility the position affords. The public nature of public employee contracts often equates to public scrutiny; however, it is the responsibility of the school committee to provide a fair compensation package for the instructional leader of the district.

Discussion of Finding #7: A majority of study participants indicated concern with the impact of school committee members' personal agendas.

Results presented and analyzed in Chapter Four indicate that most study participants are concerned of the potential impact that a school committee members' personal agenda may have on the direction of the district, and consequently, the superintendents time.

Practical Implications. Finding Seven suggests that constituents may run for school committee for individual, personal reasons, rather than to assistant in the facilitation of improved

teaching and learning for all district students. It may be suggested that community members considering a run for a school committee seat engage in training, formal or informal, which clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of the committee.

Theoretical Implications. The research suggests that, "the most direct means of influencing the educational system is to become part of it, specifically by being elected or appointed to your school committee" (Goldman, 1991, p.56). Community members choose to run for school committee for a vast array of altruistic reasons, the concern comes about when a single issue, community member joins a school committee.

In Massachusetts, The Education Reform Act of 1993 established clear roles and responsibilities of the school committee and its members. In 1995, then Commissioner of Education, Robert V. Antonucci, published an advisory on school governance whose purpose was to explain how the state law (Act) applied to school governance, including the clear delineation of responsibility between the school committee and the superintendent. (Antonucci,1995).

Recommendations. Since 2002, the State of Massachusetts has required newly elected school committee member to complete an orientation program lasting at least eight hours. Based on the requirement of an orientation program, the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) facilitates a class called, Charting the Course, which focuses on the *Eight Key Components of School Leadership* as identified by the MA Legislature in the Acts of 2002. It is of the upmost importance that the professional development provided for school committee members include the need for a positive, productive superintendent-committee relationship. The role of the school committee and the role of the superintendent need to be clearly defined to avoid potential conflict. Superintendents need to be given the authority and latitude to be both

the instructional leaders and the managers of the district. School committee members, as the elected representatives of the community, must engage in policymaking, oversight of the budget and budget priorities, and collective bargaining with the unions. The day-to-day operation of the district must remain with the superintendent.

Discussion of Finding #8. A majority of study participants stated that they are familiar with the application and interview process for a superintendent position.

Results presented and analyzed in Chapter Four indicate that most study participants understand and are familiar with the application and interview process for a superintendent position.

Practical and Theoretical Implications. Both the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS) and the Massachusetts School Administrators Association (MSAA) have sponsored professional development in the area of the application and interview process for superintendent positions. Based on the results of Finding Eight, qualified, certified central office administrators have either availed themselves of the opportunities presented by the professional organization or have witnessed the process and have a clear understanding of the application and interview process. Additionally, study participants are aware of the professional development provided by professional organizations, as it relates to the application and interview process for the superintendent.

Recommendations. State professional organizations, such as MASS, MSSA and Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) must continue to provide professional development to prepare and encourage qualified candidates to successfully endeavor superintendent positions.

Summary of Findings

In synthesizing the findings, I concluded that all study participants had a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the school superintendent. Additionally, participants believe they have the knowledge, skills and disposition to be a superintendent. The central office administrators who participated in this study had observed the application and interview process, or they engaged in focused professional development in this area provided by the professional organizations in Massachusetts. The application and interview process to become a superintendent was not an impediment to the study participants.

Based on the data collected and analyzed, the phenomena of qualified, certified, central office administrators choosing to not become superintendents is reflective of the challenges of the job itself. If one was to become a superintendent, there was a significant concern that one's quality of life and job satisfaction would decrease from what is currently afforded them in their central office position. The additional compensation provided a superintendent does not offset the additional responsibilities, stress, or impact on work-life balance and job satisfaction.

The relationship between the elected school committee and the superintendent was of noteworthy concern. Even when the relationship is positive, with common goals and objectives, managing the demands of the committee can be exhausting. With changes in committee membership, individual agendas, and differing philosophies can quickly end a superintendent's tenure in a district. "The prospect of working with a school board whose membership might change quickly definitely dampens the enthusiasm of assistant superintendents aspiring to the chief administrative role" (Rosenberg, 2018, p. 2).

The findings of this study are in concert with those of Domenech (2009), the former Executive Director of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA). He

identified three disincentives for considering a superintendent position, “the funding level for public education; personal family sacrifices; and school board relations and challenges” (Domenech, 2009, p. 29).

Future Research

While this study provided data on the reasons qualified, certified, central office administrators in southeastern Massachusetts, were choosing not to become superintendents, additional research can be done to expand the understanding of this phenomenon. Suggestions for future research include increasing the number of study participants, inclusion of current and aspiring superintendents, and the school committee members’ understanding of both the school committee’s and superintendent’s roles and responsibilities.

Increasing the Number of Study Participants

Expanding the number of study participants beyond southeastern Massachusetts would expand the data on why certified, qualified central office administrators are choosing to not become superintendents. In this study, the number of female participants out-numbered male participants, increasing the number of study participants and ensuring a balance of male and female study participants may provide a clearer picture as to the differences in the thoughts and feelings of male and female administrators. The professional organizations in Massachusetts provide professional development for both school committee members and prospective superintendents; expanding the study to include other states will consider the roles these types of organizations have on the recruitment and training of school committee members and prospective superintendents.

The Inclusion of Current Superintendents

This study included only current certified, qualified central office administrators who had

not applied for a superintendent position in the past two years. A suggestion for future research is to include the superintendents of study participants. The triangulation of data relative to the job satisfaction, compensation, relationship with the school committee, and mentorship could shed additional light as to the reason's professions are choosing not to become superintendents.

Aspiring Superintendents

While this study focused on qualified, certified central office administrators who have chosen not to apply for superintendent positions, another avenue of study would be to study those who have either applied for superintendent positions or are in the early years of their superintendent career. The data may reveal the reasons they chose to become superintendents, even with the various reasons identified to not become a superintendent.

The Role of the School Committee and Superintendent

Another suggestion for future research is to investigate the beliefs of school committee members as to their role as committee members and the delineation of roles between the committee and the superintendent. The possibility of an individual with an agenda driven purpose is an impediment to many otherwise certified, qualified superintendent candidates. The Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) provides professional development for newly elected school committee members, but from my research, it isn't enough. Collecting data from current and former school committee members may assist in the development of professional development which better informs school committee members as to their explicit (and implicit) roles and responsibilities.

Final Reflection

As I complete yet another year in public education, becoming a superintendent is the next logical step in my career ladder. I have applied a proverbial brake, however, as I have ascended toward the top public-school leadership job. As I engaged in this study, collected data and interviewed those in a similar position as I, it has become clear that changes need to be made in two areas: (1) the expectations placed upon superintendents and (2) the relationship between the elected school committee and the superintendent.

This study makes it clear that certified, qualified central office administrators know the job and believe they have the skills necessary to be successful as a superintendent. Educators enter the field of education to make a difference in the lives of students and the communities they serve, leaders become superintendents to lead the learning, and consequently make a difference in the community (Domenech, 2009). If the conditions for which superintendent work do not change, attracting and retaining qualified leaders to fill superintendent positions will only become more difficult.

With this dissertation complete, I plan to share the finding with the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) to assist in the development of their Charting the Course coursework. Additionally, the findings will be shared with the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents with the hopes that, as an organization of superintendents, they will continue their engagement with leaders at the federal, state and local levels to produce meaningful change in the myriad of external stressors and pressures placed upon superintendents to produce change in their district.

I end this final reflection with a message to those who are qualified and certified to be a school superintendent and have chosen not to become a superintendent. As educators and

educational leaders, we have an impact on the community and students we serve. Every single person who works in a school district contributes to the success of the district, regardless of their title.

This study reminds me that we, as educators and leaders, have much work to do to make the superintendent's position one that people want to ascend to. Through superintendent training programs, new superintendent induction programs, the mentoring of school and district leaders, and advocating for a decrease in school mandates at both the state and federal level, the position of school superintendent may, again, be a position to which more educational leaders aspire.

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Appendix A

Invitation to Participate

Sample Email to Central Office Administrators

Dear Colleague,

My name is Felicia Moschella, Assistant Superintendent for Business and Finance in the Abington Public Schools. I am currently engaged in a study for the completion of a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership at Lesley University.

I am writing to you to ask for approximately ten minutes of your time to assist me in the understanding of why you, as a certified and qualified central office administrator, is choosing to not apply for superintendent positions.

Below is a link to a brief survey about the superintendency. The survey asks for your demographic information, your knowledge and skills, and your opinions regarding what I have identified as reasons you may not be applying for superintendent positions.

Please take a few minutes to complete this survey. Your participation is of course completely voluntary and will remain confidential. You may choose to not take part in the research or exit the survey at any time without penalty.

If you would be willing to consent to and participate in a confidential interview, please reply to this email or provide your contact information on the survey.

Thank you,

Felicia Moschella
Ph.D. Candidate, Lesley University
Felicia544@gmail.com (cell) 781.351.6761

There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should, be reported if they arise. Contact the Committee Chairpersons at irb@lesley.edu

Appendix B

Survey

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You may choose to not take part in the research or exit the survey at any time without penalty. By continuing with the survey, you are providing consent for the data to be used in my research.

There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should, be reported if they arise. Contact the Committee Chairpersons at irb@lesley.edu

If you have any questions, please contact me, Felicia Moschella at (781)351-6761 or at felicia544@gmail.com

Q.1
Have you applied for a superintendent position in the past two years?

Yes : Thank you for your interest in participating, however, you do not meet the participation criteria
No

Q 2.
How important do you believe the following responsibilities are for a superintendent of schools?

Extremely Important	Very Important	Moderately Important	Slightly Important	Not Important
Curriculum and instruction leadership of the district				
Provide the vision and goals for the district				
Supervision of the principals				
Provide leadership to the school committee				
Attend and engage with member of the community during after school activities (athletics, drama, music, etc)				
Work closely with town officials on topics important to the schools				
Advocate at the local, state (and federal level) for issues pertinent to the local district				
Manage and oversee the school department budget				
Ability to provide leadership the area of collective and non-collective bargaining with employees				

Q 3.
Rate your knowledge and proficiency in the following areas:

Extremely knowledgeable/ proficient	Very knowledgeable/ proficient	Moderately knowledgeable/ proficient	Slightly knowledgeable/ proficient	Not knowledgeable/ proficient at all
Curriculum and instruction leadership of the district				
Provide the vision and goals for the district				
Supervision of the principals				
Provide leadership to the school committee				
Attend and engage with member of the community during after school activities (athletics, drama, music, etc)				
Work closely with town officials on topics important to the schools				
Advocate at the local, state (and federal level) for issues pertinent to the local district				
Manage and oversee the school department budget				
Ability to provide leadership the area of collective and non-collective bargaining with employees				

Q 4.
IMPACT ON PERSONAL LIFE: To what degree have the following influenced your decision to NOT apply for superintendent positions:

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Having a diminished quality of life				
The impact on my current work-life balance				
Decreased direct contact with students and staff				
The compensation does not correlate with the increased responsibility				
I am appropriately compensated for the responsibilities I currently have				
The job stability is less than my current position and I am not willing to take the risk				
It is not the right time for me to make a job/career change				
I do not believe I will have the same level of job satisfaction as a superintendent, as I have now				

Q 5.
IMPACT OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE: To what degree have the following influenced your decision to NOT apply for superintendent positions:

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
The public nature of supervision and evaluation of the superintendent by the school committee (usually non-educators)				
The possibility of school committee turnover during my tenure				

The impact of school committee member's personal agendas on the direction of the district and consequently, my time
The relationship between the school committee and the town/city governing board

Q 6.
DISTRICT-WIDE RESPONSIBILITIES AND LEADERSHIP: To what degree have the following influenced your decision to NOT apply for superintendent positions:

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree

Being responsible for fiscal compliance
Being responsible for district policies and procedures
Being responsible for negotiations with school department unions
Providing leadership in curriculum development as it relates to state standards

Q 8.
IMPACT OF THE APPLICATION, INTERVIEW AND HIRING PROCESS: To what degree have the following influenced your decision to NOT apply for superintendent positions:

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree

I'm unsure of my qualifications and ability to be offered a superintendent position at time
The preparation and submission of an application and the interview process is unfamiliar to me
The public nature of the superintendent's application and interview process
The public scrutiny of a superintendent's contract
The professional organizations I belong to have provided professional development in the area of application and interviewing for superintendent positions

Q 7.
EXPERIENCES AND MENTORS: To what degree have the following influenced your decision to NOT apply for superintendent positions:

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree

I have been mentored and encouraged by my current superintendent to apply for superintendent positions
I have been mentored by an educational professional, other than my superintendent, to apply for superintendent positions
My superintendent has discouraged me from applying for superintendent positions
After observing my superintendent/mentor, I have decided that the position is not for me at this time
I do not have the confidence to be the leader of an entire school organization.

Please provide any additional information related to the reasons you have decided to NOT apply a superintendent position at this time:

_____

Have you ever applied for a superintendent position?

Yes
No

Gender:
Male
Female

Your age:
Under 40
41-45
46-50
51-55
56-60
Over 60

Marital Status:
Single
Married
Divorced
In a relationship

Number of Children:
0
0 - but want to start a family
1-3
More than 4

Student enrollment in the district where you are currently employed:
Under 500
501-1500
1501-2000
2001-2500
2501-3000
Over 3000 students

Your current title:
Assistant Superintendent responsible for _____

Director of Curriculum
Special Education Director
Business Official
Other _____

Other positions you have held during your educational career (select all that apply):
Teacher
Assistant Principal
Principal
Special Education Team Chair
Business Official
Superintendent
None
Other _____

The highest educational degree you have attained:
Bachelor's degree
Master's degree in education
Master's degree in another field _____
Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study (CAGS)
Ed.D./ Ph.D
Other _____

Massachusetts Department of Education Licensure you currently hold (Select all that apply):
Teacher
Assistant Principal/Principal
Business Manager
Special Education Administrator
Supervisor/Director
Assistant Superintendent/Superintendent

How many of years you have been in the field of education:
Less than 5
6-9 years
10-15 years
16-20 years
More than 21 years

How many years you have been in your current position?
Less than 2 years
3-5 years
6-9 years
10-15 years

16-20 years
More than 21 years

Have you held central office positions in another district?
Yes
No

Approximately how many years until your anticipated retirement?
Less than 2 years
2-5 years
6-9 years
10-14 years
more than 15 years

What is the gender of your current superintendent?
Male
Female
How would you describe your satisfaction with your current position:

Very satisfied - I could/may remain in this position for the remainder of my career
Satisfied - I would only leave if the "perfect" opportunity was presented to me.
Somewhat satisfied - If the right opportunity was available, I would pursue it.
Not satisfied - I am currently looking for another position.
Other: explain _____

Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview?

If YES Please provide your name, email and phone number.

_____

Thank you for participating. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact

me at felicia544@gmail.com or (781) 351-6761

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

Thank you for participating in the interview portion of my research. Your participation in the interview is voluntary. At any time, if you feel uncomfortable or do not want to answer a question, please let me know. You may also stop the interview at any time. The information you provide today will be collected and coded. Individually identifiable information will not be used in this research study.

Data collected will be stored in a password-protected file on my computer. All data will be destroyed in no more than five years

By continuing with the interview, you are providing consent for the data to be used in my research.

1. When you think of the position of superintendent, what do you believe to be the most important skills one must have to be successful?
2. Of all the responsibilities of a school superintendent, what do you believe are the most important? Most challenging? Most rewarding?
3. Do you think you will be a good/effective superintendent? What experiences have you had that have best prepared you for the position?
4. You are both certified and considered qualified for a superintendent position, do you envision yourself as a superintendent? In the next year? Five years? Ten years? Before you retire?
    a. If yes:
        i. Why do you want to be a superintendent?
        ii. How will you know the time is right?
        iii. How will you decide if a position is the right one for you to apply for?
    b. If you do not envision yourself as a superintendent…Have you ever?
        i. What factors have influenced your decision to not pursue the position?
        ii. Follow-up with questions relative to the answers provided in the survey sections:
            1. Impact on personal life
            2. Impact of the School Committee
            3. District-wide responsibilities
            4. Impact of the application, interview and hiring process
            5. Experiences and mentors
5. Do you feel as though you have been appropriately mentored (formally or informally)? Has/have your mentors encouraged you to become a superintendent?
6. Why do you believe a shortage of certified, qualified Superintendent candidates exists in Massachusetts and across the country? What needs to change in education for people to want these district leadership positions?